



From the makers of Doctor Who

THE Sarah Jane ADVENTURES

From the makers of Doctor Who Series created by Russell T Davies

The Death of the Doctor

Written by Gary Russell Based on the script by Russell T Davies

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Chapter One

Very bad news

It was a fairly normal weekend in Bannerman Road. So far.

Of course, normal can mean different things to different people. To Haresh Chandra, "normal" meant it was a good day to go outside, and wash the rather smart car that he drove. Gita, his wife, was inside their home, going through invoices and bills relating to Bloomin' Lovely. That was the name of the florist business she ran from a small shop on the Parade, up near Park Vale station. Although, Haresh had noted more than once, she seemed to run it from their kitchen table more often than not. The kitchen was Haresh's domain – he loved cooking and after a hard day being headmaster at Park Vale Comprehensive School, there was nothing he liked more than to come home, turn the oven on and whip up something exceptional for Gita and their seventeen-year-old daughter Rani.

But when Gita was in "bills and invoices" mode, the kitchen was lost to him for the day, so the open air, a hosepipe of water and a soft sponge to shine up his car always seemed the best option. As for Rani, she was where she always was when not studying for her exams. She was over with their neighbour and friend, Sarah Jane Smith. Haresh often wondered why Sarah Jane took such an interest in Rani and her friend Clyde. Haresh was never sure he quite trusted Clyde - he was a bit of a joker at school. Haresh had to acknowledge that Clyde had never actually done

anything to upset his daughter, so he opted to keep quiet, but always kept an eye on the boy.

Haresh glanced over at Sarah Jane's big corner house, number 13. The little green car she drove was in the driveway so he knew they hadn't gone anywhere, but she had been in there quite some time. Then he remembered it was Saturday afternoon – of course, it was the regular Saturday afternoon call from Sarah Jane's son, and Haresh's former star pupil, Luke. He was at Oxford University a year early – yes, he was that brainy – and would soon be home for a long weekend. But in the meantime, he was always the dutiful son and got in touch. Poor Sarah Jane missed him dreadfully, but at least they were in regular contact.

With a smile at Luke's success, Haresh went back to washing dirt and stuff off the front of his car.

Over the road, in the attic of that big house, Sarah Jane, Rani and Clyde were, as Haresh had guessed, grouped around a laptop, talking to Luke over the webcam. If Haresh had been with them, he might, however, have been alarmed and surprised to see that the attic also played host to a number of alien artefacts and devices Sarah Jane had accumulated over the years that she had spent either travelling in time and space with her old friend the Doctor, or since she had taken up her unofficial role as defender of Earth. From an attic. In Ealing. With Rani, Luke and Clyde. And Mr Smith, the huge, sentient alien supercomputer built into the chimney stack.

Mr Smith had actually been the topic of the initial conversation with Luke. He and his robot dog, K-9, had suggested some new upgrades to Mr Smith's software, but Mr Smith wasn't convinced they were necessary. Sarah Jane reckoned this was more because his old sparring partner K-9 had suggested them, but she wasn't going to press the point. And when the one-liners between Mr Smith and K-9

had got just a little bit beyond witty one-upmanship, she had changed the subject.

'Well, I hope you've finished all your coursework,' Sarah Jane said to Luke.

Luke clapped delightedly from his small study in Oxford. 'Ha! Sanjay owes me five quid,' he laughed. 'Cos I bet him you'd say that!'

Sarah Jane smiled tightly. 'I see.'

But Clyde leaned towards the screen. 'And who is Sanjay?'

Luke paused for a second, as if thinking how best to describe his friend. 'Well, he's in a room just down the hall. He's brilliant, we just clicked right away. He's studying biology and he's so clever, he's like my best mate.'

Rani glanced at Clyde and could see a look of surprise cross his face. For years, Clyde had been Luke's best mate. They shared so much, and were such very close friends, it had to be hard for him to accept that Luke might have made new friends. Especially so quickly.

Luke carried on. 'I mean, he's smart, but so cool too and he makes me laugh. Great jokes and lines. In fact, I think he's the best mate I've ever had in my life.'

Luke paused and stared out of the laptop screen. And then let out a huge whoop of laughter and rocked back in his seat, almost disappearing from view. 'Oh, that's brilliant,' he shrieked, and then reappeared pointing at Clyde. 'Your face! Gotcha!'

It had been a joke at Clyde's expense.

'What?' Clyde asked. 'I don't get...what?'

But Sarah Jane and Rani were laughing too, and Sarah Jane gave Clyde a hug. Even K-9 in Oxford flashed his eyes as if sharing the joke.

'That's a classic,' Rani giggled.

And Clyde realised he'd been had. Luke was teasing him, and he stared hard at his friend in Oxford.

'No way! Forget next weekend, swot-boy,' he said, trying to sound cross, but then joined in the laughter. 'Oh, you are so on your own.' Clyde smiled as Rani ruffled the top of his head. 'Right, that's war, Lukey-boy. I'll get you for that, when you least expect it.'

Luke just smiled back. 'Bring it on,' he said.

The laughter was interrupted by Mr Smith, suddenly making a loud pronouncement.

'Emergency broadcast!' he said, instantly silencing everyone. 'UNIT armed forces are converging on this house, Sarah Jane. Right now.'

Haresh had been joined by an excited Gita when the noise began. Other neighbours were standing by their houses or gathering on the corner. Old Mrs Kuthrapali was there (of course she was, it might be gossip-worthy), so was Mr Lawrence and his fluffy dog. The Frasers were gathered around their car...everyone was staring at Sarah Jane's house, which was now surrounded by a group of black Landrovers with UNIT insignia emblazoned on their doors and bonnets. Black clad soldiers with red berets, guns slung over their shoulders, were pouring out.

Haresh and Gita had encountered UNIT before in connection with Sarah Jane Smith, so they weren't quite as surprised as everyone else was, but neither of them was quite sure what UNIT were. Some kind of special military department, Haresh had gathered last time, which Sarah Jane must have encountered through her journalism. But he always got the impression that it wasn't exactly a very warm connection, and Sarah Jane certainly seemed to share his concern that men with guns near Rani and Clyde wasn't that good an idea.

'What do you think Sarah's done now, my darling?' Gita asked Haresh, while peering at a tall, well-built soldier stood closest to them. 'Should we ask him?'

Haresh sighed and eased his wife back towards their house. 'I'm sure Sarah Jane will deal with it.'

At which point a sleek black car with red military number plates and darkened windows glided up and stopped, its nose just on Sarah Jane's drive.

A soldier hopped out of the driving seat and opened the rear door and a woman got out. She was tall, young and beautiful, but carried herself with an authority that Haresh immediately related to. She wore a long, dark dress uniform, emblazoned with a UNIT logo on the sleeves and a ribbon of colours across her chest, and a red beret. She was in charge of all these people, no two ways about it.

As she stepped on to the driveway, a voice rang out.

'And you can stop right there!'

It was Sarah Jane, striding out of her front door, Clyde and Rani sensibly staying back a bit.

'I'm not having UNIT soldiers on my property.'

Haresh called out. 'Everything all right Sarah Jane?'

She waved to him. 'Yes, fine, thank you. They're just leaving.'

But it was clear that the tall woman from UNIT wasn't going anywhere. 'Miss Smith, my name is Colonel Tia Karim, representing the Unified Intelligence Taskforce. May I have a word in private?'

Sarah Jane indicated the assembled troops, vehicles and neighbours. 'Oh, I think it's a bit late for privacy, Colonel,' she said tightly. 'So as you are not getting any further on to my drive, just tell me what you want.'

Colonel Karim didn't react, as far as Haresh could see. 'I'm sorry, but it is my solemn duty to inform you...' and then the officious demeanour dropped slightly. 'I'm afraid, Miss Smith, your friend the Doctor is dead.'

'Don't be stupid,' said Clyde, backing up Sarah Jane, along with Rani.

'He can't be,' Rani added.

Colonel Karim sighed loudly. 'I apologise for just dropping this on you all. I know you all knew him. But last Sunday, at 1700 hours, the body of a Time Lord was returned to Earth. UNIT's scientific advisors have checked the DNA and it's definitely him. I'm sorry for your loss.'

Haresh had only caught snatches of the conversation across the road, but he knew the Doctor was an old friend of Sarah Jane's, someone very special to her. Didn't know he was a Lord though.

Colonel Karim seemed to glance back towards Haresh and the other neighbours, adding, 'I'm sorry for the whole wide world. Because he's gone. The Doctor is dead.'

Chapter Two

The Epitaph Stone

If Colonel Karim was surprised by, or even interested in, the contents of Sarah Jane's attic, thought Rani, she hid it well. But then, maybe UNIT knew exactly what was up here. They seemed to know far too much about everything, and Rani knew that made Sarah Jane wary of them. Even though she used to help them out alongside the Doctor once.

The Doctor.

Sarah Jane's old friend who took her away from planet Earth many years ago in his TARDIS, and who had inspired her to start up her defending-Earth plan. Rani, Luke and Clyde had met the Doctor about a year ago, when Sarah Jane had been about to marry a nice man called Peter. The Doctor had arrived and stopped the wedding, revealing that poor Peter had been duped by an old foe of theirs called the Trickster, a member of something called the Pantheon of Discord. The Trickster was always trying to destroy something Sarah Jane referred to as 'the fabric of time', usually helped by a tiny dwarfish alien slave called the Graske.

Perhaps this was some kind of plot by the Trickster, because surely the Doctor couldn't be dead. He was so...so alive. The most alive person Rani had ever met, he just burst with energy and drive and –

'The Doctor was found 10,000 light years away,' Colonel Karim was saying, which brought Rani back into the moment.

Clyde was holding Sarah Jane's arm, although she didn't look like she needed his support or comfort. Indeed, Sarah Jane looked anything but upset. Angry, maybe, but she wasn't crying or anything. She moved Clyde's hand from her arm.

'And?'

'His body was found by a race we know to be the Shansheeth, which we recognise as a sort of intergalactic undertakers.' Colonel Karim passed a small black stone to Sarah Jane. 'They gave us this. They call it an Epitaph Stone, it's a recording device. An alien death notice, really...'

Sarah Jane snatched the stone and stared at it. 'Oh, come on, Colonel, this is ridiculous. Epitaph Stone? There's no such thing...'

Mr Smith's melodious voice rang out. 'Sarah Jane, I can confirm that the Shansheeth are known throughout the universe as the carers of the dead. It is said they trawl the battlefields of outer space, looking for heroes to take to their original homes.'

Sarah Jane crossed the attic and placed the stone on one of his scanning trays, throwing him a look. 'Just shut up and play this thing,' she snapped.

Mr Smith lowered the attic's lights and a pool of white light appeared in the centre of the attic.

And then a hologram flickered into existence before them. Rani walked around it, realising that wherever she stood, the flickering image stared at her. She reached for Sarah Jane's hand, but like Clyde before, her gesture was pushed away, gently but firmly.

The creature in the hologram was about seven feet tall, and looked like a giant vulture, with its beaked head at the end of a long neck and three blue crystals embedded in its forehead. It was wearing long purple robes with ornate gold braiding and two clawed hands were in supplication around its chest, almost as if it was praying. When it spoke, the voice was solemn and low, and to Rani sounded like it was

coming from something dead itself. There was no feeling or emotion as it spoke and she felt goosebumps rise on her skin in response.

'I bring condolences from the Claw Shansheeth of the Fifteenth Funeral Fleet, upon this terrible day –'

Sarah Jane snorted. 'Oh, well, Colonel, if you're going to trust that thing. Just look at it.'

Rani coughed at Sarah Jane. 'That's not fair,' she said quietly. 'Since when do we judge by appearances?'

Sarah Jane wouldn't look at Rani, but instead just stared at the huge bird-like creature, now frozen in the air before them, as Mr Smith had paused the recording. 'Ever since this lot started lying to us. To me.'

Rani nodded. 'Okay. Look, I hope it is a big mistake, I really do. But for the Doctor's sake, we've got to find out the facts. Which means we stop. And listen. Just like you always taught us, yeah?'

Sarah Jane finally looked at Rani and took a deep breath. 'Okay. Yeah. Mr Smith?'

And the computer continued to play the holographic message from the Shansheeth.

The melodious voice continued its spoken lament. 'The Shansheeth did journey to the Wastelands of the Crimson Heart, whereupon we found the body of the last of the Time Lords. Witnesses say that he perished saving the lives of five hundred children from the Scarlet Monstrosity.'

'Sounds like him,' Clyde murmured to Sarah Jane, but she wasn't listening. She was just staring at the giant hunched-up vulture flickering in the midst of the attic.

'The famous Gallifrey, the Doctor's homeworld, is long since lost. But legends talk of his love for planet Earth. Therefore the Claw Shansheeth will return the Doctor's body to the human race.' The blue-jewel-encrusted Shansheeth bowed its mighty head a bit lower. 'O weep for him, peoples of Earth; mourn his loss. For the universe feels darker this night.'

For a moment the hologram froze and the caught-in-themoment Shansheeth seemed to be staring right at Sarah Jane, almost daring her to react.

She didn't, even after the hologram vanished and Mr Smith raised the lighting.

Rani wiped a tear from her cheek and even Clyde seemed a bit upset, clearing his throat suddenly.

And still Sarah Jane said nothing. Did nothing. Just gazed at the space where the giant bird had stood. Colonel Karim waited and when no one spoke, she finally let out a sigh. 'UNIT is taking charge of the funeral, in conjunction with the Shansheeth. We'll be using UNIT Base Five, situated inside Mount Snowdon.'

'What do you think?' Rani whispered to Sarah Jane.

'Thank you,' the older woman replied.

Colonel Karim smiled slightly, just for a moment. 'Then you'll come? All of you?'

'Oh, yes,' said Sarah Jane. 'Nothing is going to make me miss this. I'll be there.' And she looked Colonel Karim straight in the eye. 'And prove to you that this is all wrong. He's not dead.'

If Colonel Karim was going to respond, she chose not to, but instead nodded and saluted before leaving the attic.

After she had gone, there was silence in the attic until they heard the front door below slam shut.

'Sarah Jane -' Mr Smith started, but she waved him into silence.

'He's the Doctor,' she said. 'He never gives up. And nor do I.'

Haresh was drying the dishes, while Gita was on the phone to a client, wandering around the back garden, gesticulating madly, despite the fact that whoever she was talking to couldn't see her. The front door slammed shut and he turned from the sink to see Rani walk in, sullen and looking at the floor, as if something really interesting was on the carpet that she had never seen before.

'So,' he said to his daughter, 'what was that all about? All those soldiers and stuff? She's weird, Sarah Jane. I mean, there's always something happening at her house and -'

He was cut off as Rani all but launched herself at him from the living room, throwing her arms around him and giving him a huge, tight hug.

Pleased at the hug, Haresh was nevertheless aware this was unusual and something was upsetting her.

'Hey,' he said quietly into her ear. 'What's this for?'

'Don't you ever go anywhere, okay?'

'What?' laughed Haresh. 'Not even to the shops?'

But Rani held him tighter. 'Please. Not anywhere. Ever. Promise?'

'Okay,' Haresh said, hugging her back. 'I promise.'

Finally Rani broke free and told him that the Doctor had been killed in an accident.

'They knew each other via UNIT,' Rani explained. 'That's why they came to tell her.'

'Must have been a pretty important person for all that noise and kerfuffle,' Haresh said.

'He was,' Rani said simply.

'Did you ever meet him?'

Rani nodded. 'Once.' But that was all she said about him.

And Haresh knew that if his daughter was this upset, Sarah Jane had to be feeling a great deal worse.

'Is there anything we can do for her?'

But Rani shook her head. 'I think she just wants to be left alone.' She smiled at her dad. 'She's asked Clyde and I to go to the funeral tomorrow, in Wales. Is that okay? They're sending a car for us and putting us up and everything.'

'Well, I'm not sure...' Haresh started to say, but then saw Rani's face. And he could never say no to either of the women in his family. 'Of course you must go,' he said. 'You have to support Sarah Jane.'

And Rani hugged him again. Just a little bit tighter. 'I love you, Dad,' she said.

Later that night, in the attic of 13 Bannerman Road, Sarah Jane was talking to Luke, via webcam.

Tonight, Luke could sense that his Mum needed him to listen to her rather than talk fun nonsense, as they usually did.

'I always thought...if ever the Doctor died, I'd just know,' she explained, although she wasn't looking at Luke's image, but was walking around the room. 'Wherever he was, if he was far away on some distant planet or lost in the depths of the Dark Ages...that I'd know. But I didn't. I didn't feel a thing.'

Luke had met the Doctor on a couple of occasions – once they'd even teamed up to save the world from the Daleks and on another, he'd saved Luke's life when he'd carelessly walked in front of a speeding car, because he'd been distracted, talking to Clyde on his mobile.

The Doctor meant a lot to him, too, so he could more than sympathise with his mum. But Luke was pragmatic – practical and rational. 'That doesn't actually mean anything, though, Mum,' he said quietly.

'Maybe it does!' she said rather loudly. 'Because I don't think he is dead. He can't be!' And she came back to the computer and looked at Luke. 'I'm going to that funeral, Luke, but only to find out what's going on. Because I know the Doctor is still alive!'

Chapter Three

Bang on time

Clyde and Rani were outside Rani's house, waiting for the UNIT car to come and collect them. Gita was brushing down Rani's blouse when Haresh emerged from their home with Rani's overnight bag. 'Don't know what you've got in here,' he muttered. 'Feels like you're going for a month, not a night.'

Clyde was explaining his concerns to Gita. 'Luke says Sarah Jane's gone mad.'

'Oh, don't be rude, my darling,' Gita said. 'Luke would never say "mad" about his own mother.'

Clyde nodded. 'He also said "nutty, fruity, loop the loop, tonto-barmy-bonkers".'

'I'm sure he didn't,' Haresh said. 'Rani, have you got everything now?'

Rani nodded. 'It's true though, Luke's dead worried.'

'Sadness affects people in different ways,' Haresh said. 'Remember your Grandmother when Granddad Ram died?'

Rani nodded. 'Yeah, she washed everything. Curtains. Furniture. She even washed the walls.'

'I remember,' Gita added. 'I mean, who washes walls?'

'It went on for days,' Rani remembered. 'And then...then she just started crying.'

'It takes time,' Haresh explained to the two teenagers. 'Because when someone dies, it's so massive, it's like you can't fit it all inside your head.' He stroked Rani's hair. 'And that's what Sarah Jane's doing now. She's denying it.'

'So what can we do to help her?' asked Clyde.

'Wait,' Gita said. 'That's all you can do. Friends just wait.'
And there was the sound of a car turning into
Bannerman Road and they watched as the big black car
pulled up opposite, its UNIT emblem small but prominent on
the driver's door.

Sarah Jane came out of her house, wearing a smart jacket and jeans, nothing black or dreary in sight. 'Bang on time,' she said to the driver as he got out and took her bag and walked around to put it in the boot. He then crossed the road and hefted up Clyde and Rani's bags.

The teenagers followed him to the car and Sarah Jane called over to the parents. 'Don't worry, you two, I'll look after them.'

'Sorry to hear your bad news,' Haresh said.

'No need,' Sarah Jane said back. 'I'm fine.'

Clyde grinned back at Haresh. 'Keep the school running without me, sir. While I head off in my big posh car -' Clyde touched the rear passenger door but whipped his fingers away as a crackle of bright blue electricity arced around the palm of his hand. 'Blimey,' he muttered. 'What was that?'

'Static electricity,' Haresh called over. 'Course, if you paid more attention in class...' But Gita grabbed his arm. 'Not now, my darling.'

Haresh smiled weakly at Sarah Jane as she got into the car, followed by Clyde and Rani.

And they watched as it drove off, waving at Rani who waved back.

They were ignored by Clyde, who was still staring at the palm of his hand, frowning.

Chapter Four

The smell of time

Four hours later, the UNIT staff car drove into an area of North Wales dominated by the edifice that was Mount Snowdon, part of the famous Snowdonia National Park. But as the car drove through the country lanes, Clyde noticed more and more red-rimmed road signs that reminded the unwary that these were Restricted Areas and Not Public Highways.

Eventually the car came to a stop by a huge tunnel built into the side of a mountain. A red and white barrier blocked their view and for a moment Clyde assumed they'd gone the wrong way. After all, there was no one to greet them. Or raise the barrier. Or anything.

Then he spotted two UNIT soldiers stand up – they had been lying flat on the ground, their clothing perfectly camouflaged so that no matter how hard anyone would have looked, the soldiers had been effectively invisible.

One of the soldiers was checking the driver's ID, the other stared at him, Sarah Jane and Rani.

Remembering that Sarah Jane, despite her many years working alongside the Doctor with UNIT, was always nervous of their motives, he automatically sat on his hands, even though the blue crackling he'd seen earlier was long since gone.

The last time he'd seen that energy...well, he preferred not to think about that. And he certainly didn't want UNIT knowing it had returned.

After a moment that seemed to last an hour, the soldiers waved the car though and the barrier was raised.

Clyde stared out of the back of the car – but the soldiers were gone, back to their hidden guard duty, and no matter how hard he looked, he couldn't see where they were lying now.

After a minute in the darkness of the tunnel, the world around them burst into light and size – the car had arrived in a massive underground car park, alongside a variety of other vehicles, both military and civilian. And a couple Clyde thought looked more like space shuttles!

The door was opened and as the driver escorted Sarah Jane, Clyde and Rani exited the other door and found themselves facing Colonel Karim, all smiles and courtesy. But Clyde was uneasy. The smile didn't reach her eyes – either she was putting an enormous effort into being civil to her visitors, or she was hiding something.

Then again, maybe he was being paranoid. The blue crackling energy on his hands had worried him and if he wasn't careful, he'd be jumping at his own shadow next.

He looked around the car park as the driver opened the car's boot and passed him his overnight bag.

'Now this,' he murmured to Rani, 'this is what I call a base.'

'Yeah,' Rani said back. 'If you like guns and stuff.'

And Clyde realised that apart from the three of them, everyone carried a gun of some sort. Even Karim had a revolver holstered at her side.

'This way, please,' the Colonel said, leading them to a huge metal door, like the ones Clyde had seen on films about submarines.

But instead of turning a wheel to open it, Karim tapped a code into a panel by the door and with a hiss, it swung inwards.

Clyde noted the number. 231163. Never knew when that might be handy, if he ever came back to a UNIT base and

wanted to show he knew his way around.

As he stepped through the door, he was immediately surprised by how sterile and plain the corridor was. Indeed, it even smelled of ammonia or something, like Miss Jerome's science lab at school.

It was in every possible way unfriendly.

And Colonel Karim seemed to realise this as she gave them a guided tour – well, at least she pointed out labs, offices, toilets. She didn't actually open any doors and show them anything, or introduce them to any of the staff she mentioned.

'We've allocated bedrooms to you all,' she said. 'The funeral's tomorrow at nine hundred hours, so that gives you time enough to acclimatise.'

Clyde wasn't sure what they needed to acclimatise to, bar the smell and the various featureless corridors they had walked down, guaranteed to ensure he had no idea of the way back to the car because everything looked the same.

They went through another keyboard-activated door and as it shut with a clang behind them, Karim explained this was the Funeral Wing and that they were under a curfew. But she said it with a smile. 'The doors to the Funeral Wing will be sealed at twenty-one hundred hours tonight –' she glanced at Clyde. 'That's 9pm.'

'I know,' Clyde replied. 'I'm not stupid.'

Karim looked at him with an expression that either meant she didn't believe him, or that she was disappointed to learn he knew such things. Either way, it annoyed him.

'This is still a working military base,' she continued. 'So you'll only have access to the specified areas.'

'That's nice,' Sarah Jane said tartly. 'Bring us all this way just to tell us we're not trusted.'

There was a moment, just a look, between Sarah Jane and Karim, and Clyde reckoned the temperature in the corridor actually dropped a few degrees.

Rani must have felt it too, because she broke the tension by asking Karim who else was coming to the Doctor's funeral.

'It's been a bit of rush,' Karim said. 'Sir Alistair's stranded in Peru due to volcanic ash restricting long-haul flights that even we can't overrule. And Miss Shaw can't make it back from the Moonbase until Sunday.'

'Whoa! You've got a Moonbase?' Clyde just stared at her. That was so cool. 'I wanna go to that!'

'Maybe one day,' Karim said. 'When you're a grown-up.'

As Karim turned away, Rani threw Clyde an "ooh, get her" look and Clyde grinned at her.

She turned a corner and they followed.

And stopped.

Ahead of them were ladders and boxes of tools and equipment. A couple of UNIT soldiers were attaching a sign to the wall that read FUNERAL CHAMBER in ornate lettering.

But what was amazing was the three small blue-skinned figures scurrying around, helping the soldiers: one on top of a ladder, one coming out of a large ventilation duct in the ceiling and another coming out of a similar vent at the foot of the wall where it met the floor.

'You've got Graske!' Rani gasped. 'What are you doing with Graske?'

Clyde was alarmed too – they'd met the Graske a few times, most often alongside their old enemy the Trickster. They were a race of people who, although not necessarily evil, were fairly untrustworthy and really shouldn't be in a place as supposedly secure and top-secret as a UNIT base.

Sarah Jane clearly agreed. 'I knew it,' she said to Karim. 'I knew there was something going on.'

Karim seemed genuinely puzzled by their reaction. 'I don't understand the problem,' she said.

'Graske are trouble,' Clyde said simply.

Karim seemed to understand. 'Ah, I see. But these aren't Graske,' she said.

The one that had come out of the lower ventilation duct wandered over. These Graske-sized ducts were everywhere they'd passed, Clyde noticed.

'Not Graske,' the alien said in that same staccato voice the Graske always had. 'We *Groske*. Blue face. Very different. Hate Graske. Graske make Groske stamp feet.'

And to demonstrate, the Groske stamped his foot dramatically.

Clyde could see that he did indeed have bluer skin, rather than the Graske's brown leathery skin, but otherwise, they were identical. About three feet tall, with a tri-spiked head, razor-sharp teeth, piercing yellow eyes and that slight smell of sulphur that followed them around.

'The Groske were stranded on Earth four years ago,' Karim said. 'We took them in and they offered to work in exchange for board and lodging. They are brilliant and invaluable. We wouldn't have had the rocket ready if not for them.'

'Rocket?' queried Sarah Jane.

The Groske grabbed Sarah Jane's hand and began leading her further into the corridor. 'Come see rocket,' he insisted. 'We honour Doctor with our work.'

Clyde, Rani and Karim followed them through a side door along a metallic corridor, and into a vast open space, where they realised they were standing on a gantry in a silo that stretched as far below as it did above.

And in front of them was a massive rocket.

'The X-15,' Karim said proudly. 'This will take the Doctor's body into space, sealed inside a lead-lined coffin. And then...he will be set free. The casket will sail through the stars forever. In death, as in life.'

They paused to stare for a second, Clyde seeing in his mind's eye the coffin floating out in deep space.

'Very poetic,' snapped Sarah Jane.

Again, Rani was the one to break the tension. 'I think it's beautiful. Just what he deserves.'

Sarah Jane shrugged. She was clearly still not buying any of this, still not accepting that the Doctor was dead.

Poor Sarah Jane, Clyde thought.

'Where's the TARDIS?' she said to Karim.

And for the first time, Clyde thought he saw Karim flustered. Just for a second. As if not quite sure what to say. But she covered it quickly. 'There was no sign of it. His body was found. Alone.'

Sarah gave her a look that said...Clyde wasn't sure what it said. But Sarah Jane was not happy about any of this – and Clyde knew her well enough to know this was more than just restrained grief. She was smelling a rat.

And although he hated to admit it, Clyde wondered if she was going too far. If Haresh's thing about denial was correct – that Sarah Jane just couldn't accept her oldest friend was gone and was lashing out at everything and everyone to hide her inability to deal with all this.

'Still,' he said. 'Not a bad way to go. A real, proper rocket.'

'Boy smells,' hissed the Groske beside him.

'Oi,' Clyde hissed back. 'Thanks a bunch.'

Rani was the only one who noticed this exchange as Karim had led Sarah Jane out of the silo. 'Leave it, Clyde,' she smiled and went after the others.

Clyde was going to follow when the little Groske impatiently grabbed his leg. 'Smell of time,' it said urgently. 'You see?'

Now it pointed at his hand.

And Clyde stared at the blue electricity arcing around his palm and wrist again in utter shock. 'I don't understand,' he stammered.

'So bright,' was all the Groske said.

'What d'you mean?'

And the Groske glanced at the rocket, then at the silo entrance, as if making sure they couldn't be overheard. 'He is coming,' it said and darted out of the silo.

Clyde followed, but the Groske was already gone somewhere and all he could see were Karim and Sarah Jane further down the corridor and Rani waiting for him a bit closer.

'Finished upsetting the Groske?' she laughed, but Clyde didn't reply. He was too busy wondering who exactly "was coming".

Chapter Five

Sorry for your loss

The next morning was a solemn occasion. Clyde was wearing a suit (the same one he'd worn to Sarah Jane's wedding, where he'd met the Doctor) and Rani was in a smart dress.

Sarah Jane, however, was dressed, well, just like Sarah Jane. Not scruffy or casual as such, but nothing black, like Clyde had expected. She looked like she was going out to a nice restaurant rather than a funeral for her best mate.

'She still doesn't believe it,' Rani said. 'So she's hardly going to wear a long black dress or veil or anything, is she?' said Rani.

Clyde could see Sarah Jane's logic and felt a bit daft now in his suit. So he quickly took off the tie he was wearing and swapped the dark shoes his mum had made him take for his trainers.

'You look great,' Rani assured him with a smile.

'Thanks,' he said. 'You look cool, too.'

And together they walked to the Funeral Chamber, a few steps behind Sarah Jane.

It was an impressive room, that much had to be said for it. A lot of work had gone into transforming what was normally, Clyde reckoned, a large UNIT storage area into something with a bit of atmosphere and reverence. Dark purple drapes adorned the walls and separated the back of the room, too. Presumably this was to create a small antechamber behind

the drapes, where the Shansheeth could prepare things. Long plush pews ranged across the room, again in soft purples and gold trimming. Unless hidden by the drapes, which seemed unlikely, Clyde noticed it was the only place they'd seen so far not to have a large grille in the wall leading to a Groske-sized ventilation duct. Instead, there was just a tiny normal air vent, only big enough for a mouse – really small.

At the far end, in front of the sectioned-off area, and surrounded by a host of tall candles, was a large lead-lined coffin on a raised dais. It was a simple box, but strangely attractive too – not too fussy, but not bland either, with a few indented geometric shapes in the corners. As they approached, Clyde noticed there was a small circle on the top with some inscriptions on it in a language that wasn't human. After a minute he remembered seeing similar things inside the Doctor's TARDIS when he and Rani and Luke had had a guided tour after the wedding.

'Must be Gallifreyan,' Rani said.

Sarah Jane just nodded and Clyde realised this had to be awful for her. As if it was finally sinking in that the body of the man she cared so deeply for was inches away, inside a metallic coffin.

And she couldn't fight it any longer.

She bowed very slightly, then turned to Colonel Karim who was standing a little to the side, reverently.

And from behind the drapes stepped the Shansheeth.

If they had looked alarming on the hologram, Clyde thought they were equally daunting in the flesh.

Each one had different coloured jewels embedded in its vulture-like head. There was one with yellow jewels, one with red jewels and another with blue who was clearly in charge – his purple robes had more gold trim than the other two and he looked...older and a bit wiser. This was the one from the hologram.

The blue-jewelled Shansheeth waved demonstrably with his short arms, and his wings unfurled.

'Wow,' Rani breathed.

'I am Azure of the Claw Shansheeth. I'm so sorry for your loss,' he said.

'I'm so sorry for your loss,' repeated the yellow-jewelled one. 'I am Aureolin of the Claw Shansheeth.'

'I am Amaranth of the Claw Shansheeth. I'm so sorry for your loss,' said the red-jewelled one.

The leader one, Azure, flexed his mighty wings again. 'The Claw Shansheeth invite you to reflect on the memories of a loved one lost.'

With a nod, Clyde led Rani and Sarah Jane to the front row of the pews and sat down.

'Who are all these people?' he asked.

Sarah Jane looked around. 'I don't know any of them.'

'A few old soldiers,' Colonel Karim whispered. 'It's not easy to find any friends of the Doctor. He tended to come and go without a trace.'

'Think of all the lives he touched. The whole planet should be in mourning,' Rani said. 'But no one knows.'

'You couldn't even find old UNIT people?' asked Sarah Jane, sounding like she was going to pick a fight with Karim. 'I mean, I can think of a dozen people off the top of my head. Mike, John, Winifred, Martha...'

Karim held up her hand, irritably. 'Our people tried, that's all I can say. I'm sorry you are so disappointed in us. In me,' she added a little waspishly.

Sarah Jane looked like she was about to reply, but then her shoulders drooped. It was as though her last bit of defiance had gone and she had to face the inevitable.

'Can I see him?'

Karim shook her head. 'I don't think you'd want to...'

And Sarah Jane leapt at this. One last beat of hope! 'Sounds like you've got something to hide.'

The Colonel just sighed and said gently 'Miss Smith, he was...hurt.'

The two women faced one another, almost challenging the other to say something again.

Sarah Jane finally turned away. 'I don't even know what he looks like,' she said quietly.

'I'm sorry?' said Karim.

'I think he regenerated. The last time I saw him,' Sarah Jane's voice cracked slightly. 'He didn't say a word. Just looked at me as though...' She took a deep breath. 'That body could have a different face and I wouldn't know if it was him.'

And a tear ran down her cheek and Rani took her hand. 'I'm sorry.'

Sarah Jane looked at the two of them. 'If you don't mind, I just need to gather my thoughts.'

Clyde wasn't sure what that meant, but Rani evidently did because she stood up. 'Course,' she said and yanked Clyde up and led him to a pew on the far side of the room.

'Honoured guests, steeped in grief and misery,' said Azure, folding his wings back beneath his robes. 'This is the Cradle of the Lost Chords; its bittersweet melody will unite you in sorrow.'

To the right of the dais, in front of where Clyde and Rani now sat, was a peculiar object on a plinth that Clyde thought looked like a cross between a harp and bagpipes. The redjewelled Shansheeth, Amaranth, stood beside it and began plucking at the strings that ranged across it and surprisingly beautiful music came from it.

Clyde felt a lump in his throat, as if he was about to cry. He took a deep breath. 'That's powerful music,' he muttered to Rani, whose cheeks were already glistening as she was affected by the sounds.

Azure was speaking again. 'Close your eyes. Remember.'

Clyde saw Rani close her eyes. And Sarah Jane. And all the other people in the room. Apart from Colonel Karim, who had crossed reverently to the doors and with a quick look at the yellow-jewelled Shansheeth, Aureolin, standing there, she backed out of the room and closed the doors, shutting the UNIT world out completely.

Clyde listened to the music and felt his eyes close; with a swell he remembered the Doctor.

At the wedding.

Facing the Trickster.

Sarah Jane's husband fading away.

The exploration of the TARDIS.

And then he saw himself touching the TARDIS door. And the blue electrical energy crackling around his palm for the first time.

And his eyes popped open.

Unseen by anyone else, that energy was there again.

He shoved his hands into his pockets and glanced across the room to Sarah Jane, whose eyes were tightly shut. He couldn't begin to imagine what she was remembering. Her time with the Doctor went back so far, long before Clyde was even born. The things she must have seen, the planets and races she must have visited.

He was slightly jealous, but in a good way.

The music was still strumming away. The candles were giving off a strange incense-like smell.

And it briefly crossed his mind that everyone seemed to be almost entranced.

And he was aware that all three Shansheeth were staring at him. Straight at him. As if angry that he wasn't joining in. Remembering.

But then the atmosphere was broken as behind Clyde, by the doorway, there was a crash as something hit the floor and broke.

The music stopped suddenly and everyone opened their eyes and looked across.

Two people stood in the doorway.

One was a tall teenage boy, dressed in cool casual clothes – and as unfunereal as you could get – tanned and clearly athletic, with bright intelligent blue eyes and wavy blond hair.

And the other was a much shorter, older woman, so slight she might have been invisible in the wrong light. She was wearing simple denim jeans and shirt and a pair of sneakers, but with high heels. And she was covered with a wrap that on her looked more like a blanket, decorated in what Clyde thought looked like it had come from Native American Indians or something. Her hair was snow white, which was a stark contrast to her well-tanned face.

The two of them had obviously spent a lot of time in warmer parts of the world than London!

'Oh, so sorry,' she said in a loud voice. 'Sorry, don't mind me. I brought flowers, which is silly, there's no need is there?'

And on the floor, Clyde realised, was a smashed vase of long white lilies.

'But I saw these lilies and the vase was so lovely – it was hand-blown by some Asian-Argentines, although I don't suppose you'd actually use your hands, would you? Cos glass must get awfully hot –'

Perhaps in an attempt to quieten her gabbling, the yellow-jewelled Shansheeth by the door bowed its head. 'I am Aureolin of the Claw Shansheeth. I'm so sorry for your loss.'

'Oh, thank you,' she replied and without taking a breath added, 'aren't you gorgeous?'

The other two Shansheeth repeated the mantra and she nodded to them both.

'I know,' she said. 'Isn't it terrible?' She reached out to touch Aureolin's robes. 'Oh, you are gorgeous – I wish I had my glasses, you're like vultures. Lovely, big alien vultures.' She grabbed the boy's arm, as if trying to make him touch the robes too. 'Look, babe, aren't they wonderful? And nothing to be scared of. Just like I taught you.' And she sighed loudly and a little sadly. 'Oh, I've missed all this.'

She bent down and scooped up the dropped flowers, passing them to the boy. 'Get rid of these, sweetheart, there's a good boy.'

With a smile, he carried them to a small table near the door, throwing Clyde and Rani a look that said how pleased he was to see someone of his own age in the room.

Rani motioned for him to join them, as the woman looked around at all the people sat there, nodding at some, touching shoulders or arms as she started to apologise. 'Sorry, sorry, oh, hullo I like your hat and sorry. I'm making an awful noise, aren't I? Although -' and she was facing Sarah Jane now, who had stood up, unlike the rest of the astonished guests. 'Although there's a tribe called the Nambikwara on the Mato Grosso - I lived there, back in '83 - and anyway, they sing all night when there's a funeral. They sing like birds, I swear, it's the most astonishing sound.'

And Sarah Jane smiled at her.

'I'm sorry, do I know you?' the woman asked Sarah Jane.

'We've never actually met, but it's Jo Grant, isn't it?'

The woman smiled a huge grin. 'Long time since I've heard that name. It's Jo Jones since I got married.'

'I met the Doctor just after you left,' Sarah Jane said. 'You'd gone to live in the Amazon.'

The woman, Jo, clicked her fingers. 'Of course, they told me about you when I tried to call the Brigadier one day. He's in Peru a lot, you know.'

'I know,' Sarah Jane smiled and held out her hand. 'I'm -'

'Sarah Jane Smith,' Jo grinned back. 'After all this time. And you are so beautiful!'

The two instant new friends gripped one another's hands. 'They used to tell me so many stories about you, at UNIT,' Sarah Jane said.

Jo looked slightly wistful at the memories. 'Those soldier boys. Happy days.'

Sarah Jane noticed the yellow-jewelled Shansheeth by the door staring at them, perhaps wanting them to stop talking, so the service could carry on – and she ignored it.

'You still married then?'

'Clifford,' Jo said. 'About thirty years now! We left him picketing an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico to come here. We've got seven children.'

Sarah Jane stared agog. 'Seven?'

'And that gorgeous boy over there,' she pointed at the young man who had arrived with her, 'he's one of twelve grandchildren. Number thirteen on its way, too!'

Sarah Jane just hugged Jo again. 'I've got one son, Luke. He's just gone to university, in Oxford. I miss him.' And perhaps anticipating Jo's next question, she shook her head slowly. 'No – no father in the picture.'

Jo grinned broadly. 'Playing the field? Good on you, girl.'

'It's not quite like that,' Sarah Jane said, looking a little embarrassed. 'It's complicated.' Then she changed tack and led Jo to the pews and they finally sat down and lowered their voices. 'It's funny, all of this today,' she waved her hand towards the Shansheeth, who all seemed to be staring at them now. 'Got me thinking. Because the Doctor showed me such a remarkable life, and once he'd gone...well, it took me a long while to get over it.'

'Me too,' said Jo.

'Then he came back.' Sarah Jane paused, remembering the times the Doctor had briefly touched her life again. And as one the Shansheeth seemed to take a step closer, and the music from the Cradle got fractionally louder, as Sarah Jane's mind brought more memories back. Deffry Vale School, where she and the Doctor stopped the Krillitane... fighting Brother Lassar...the Skasas Paradigm...and him upgrading K-9...giving her the sonic lipstick...

'Who came back?' Jo asked slowly, her voice a bit slow, as if she didn't quite get what Sarah Jane was saying. 'The Doctor?'

Sarah Jane nodded happily. 'Yeah.'

'Do you mean...recently?'

And Sarah Jane realised Jo was upset. And she hadn't meant to upset her, but she couldn't lie now. 'About...about four years ago.'

'I never saw him again.'

And Jo was thinking about the night Cliff Jones proposed to her. In that homely little cottage in Llanfairfach, Wales. And the big party with all their friends laughing and cheering. And the Doctor. Suddenly so lonely. Slipping quietly away from the party, hoping no one had noticed his sadness amidst all the happiness. But Jo had noticed and although she couldn't, and wouldn't, change her and Cliff for anything in the world, she always felt a pang of guilt that wanting to be married had stopped her and the Doctor staying together.

The Shansheeth were closer now.

'Well,' Sarah Jane said brightly. 'It was just a coincidence the first time. We were both investigating something and -'

'The first time?' cut in Jo. 'It was more than once?' She smiled slightly, to hide her disappointment. 'He must have really liked you.'

Sarah Jane said nothing.

Jo carried on, thankfully changing the subject. 'Funny thing is, Sarah Jane, I always had this notion, this thought, that if the Doctor died, one day, even if he was on Metebelis Three, or Solos, or another universe, I'd feel it.' She touched her chest. 'Here. In my heart.'

And Sarah Jane's hand was over her own heart, and she was nodding. 'That's exactly what I thought! But I didn't feel a thing.'

'Nor me. Not a peep!'

Sarah Jane suddenly got animated and after a glance at the curiously-way-too-close Shansheeth, she looked Jo straight in the eye.

'Do you think the same as me?'

'That he's still alive?'

Sarah Jane nodded furiously. 'Yes. Yes, he has to be. Because if anyone would know he wasn't, it'd be you and I!'

And the Shansheeth backed away slowly.

Clyde had been watching all this and at that point, he leaned over to Rani. 'She's not letting it go, is she?'

Rani shrugged. 'Maybe she is right, after all.' Rani nodded slightly towards the obsequious Shansheeth now returning to their places. 'And they give me the creeps.'

'Ooh,' Clyde smiled, 'what happened to not judging them?'

Rani frowned. 'I'm serious, there's something weird and _'

'Hiya.'

Rani and Clyde were cut off by the guy who'd turned up with Jo Jones sitting behind them.

'Sorry,' he whispered. 'But everyone else is about a hundred years old in here. Fancied talking to someone who might smile occasionally.'

Clyde liked him immediately and offered his hand. 'Clyde Langer, mate.'

Rani introduced herself as well.

'My name's Santiago, and that's my Gran,' he said, pointing at Jo.

'Good name,' Rani said.

Santiago grinned at the compliment. 'It's where I was born. In a caravan at the foothills of the Andes.'

'Should've called you Andy,' laughed Clyde and the other two smiled at this.

Then there was a noise from Azure who was now back right in front of the teenagers.

'With respect,' he intoned pointedly, 'the Cradle will continue. Binding you all in sorrow.'

Rani pulled a face. 'I think he's telling us to behave.'

Clyde nodded. 'Like your Dad at school assembly.'

Santiago shrugged. 'Wouldn't know. Never been to school.'

'No way! You are officially the luckiest bloke on Earth,' said Clyde. 'How come?'

'We're always travelling the world.'

'You rich?'

'Nah, exactly the opposite. But Mum and

Dad – and they got this from Gran – spend their lives going from country to country.'

'Doing what?' asked Rani.

'Protesting, mainly.' Santiago seemed so enthusiastic, so obviously proud of his parents, his eyes glinted passionately as he talked. 'At the G8 summit, Mum chained herself to the railings. And at the Climate Change Conference, Dad got arrested. Twice! Mum's in Japan right now, on a little boat, stopping those whalers.'

'Whoa!' Clyde was impressed. 'Serious life.'

Santiago nodded. 'Just to get here today, Gran and me, we were on the Southern plateau of Tierra del Fuego, so we had to hike to Buenos Aires, get a boat to Las Malvenas, then a cargo plane across the Atlantic to Dublin, then the ferry to Wales.' He smiled at the memory. 'It was fantastic. Where are you guys from?'

'Ealing,' Clyde and Rani said simultaneously. And slightly apologetically.

At which point, the Cradle of the Lost Chords was strummed again by the red-bejewelled Shansheeth, and so the Service of Remembrance began.

Chapter Six

The cradle sings

The service was over and most of the dignitaries had either left or returned to whatever meagre bedrooms UNIT had provided.

For Sarah Jane, Clyde and Rani this was the small cramped room Colonel Karim had shown them earlier.

But right now they were in Jo and Santiago's room which was, if possible, even smaller and more cramped, with a bunk bed shoved up against one wall, opposite just another blank, featureless wall with a ventilation shaft in it. There was barely enough room for more than one person to stand in the room, so as Jo and Sarah Jane sat on the bed to discuss the service and their belief that the Doctor just couldn't really be dead, the three teenagers realised they needed to get out to give them space.

And themselves.

'Right,' said Rani, practical as ever. 'We'll head off and find the canteen. Cups of tea all round?'

'Ooh,' Jo said, diving into her humungous carpetbag and pulling out a sachet. 'Just hot water for me, sweetheart. I've got some powdered Lapacho -' and Jo stopped and smiled at Sarah Jane. 'The Doctor took me to a planet once. Peladon. And the smell of Lapacho is just like the royal palace there.'

Sarah Jane breathed in, as if smelling it herself. 'I went to Peladon.'

'You never did!' laughed Jo.

Sarah Jane nodded enthusiastically. 'With the Great Beast, Aggedor.' Sarah Jane put her hands into claws and roared, and Jo giggled.

'Same planet!'

And Clyde eased Rani and Santiago out of the room. 'Okay ladies, laters!'

Sarah Jane watched the door close behind them, then reached into her own bag and pulled out a notebook and pen. 'Right, we need to make a list. Because we need to work out who'd fake the Doctor's death and why.'

And Jo nodded, but her mind seemed to be elsewhere. 'I often think about the people we met,' she said. 'Whatever happened to them after we got back in the TARDIS? There was this planet we went to once, waaaay out in space. And there were these funny little people with a sort of peepshow device, with scenes of aliens in it, and they got loose and we sorted out that problem and dealt with these awful bureaucratic toffee-nosed people in charge, but...I sometimes look up into the sky at night, at one of the stars, and wonder if it's that planet, and what it's like now.'

'I do that, too,' Sarah Jane admitted. And sighed at the memories, her list forgotten.

Back in the Funeral Chamber, standing by the Doctor's lead coffin, were the three Shansheeth. Amaranth was still strumming the Cradle of the Lost, his musical instrument, now loudly enough that the sound travelled out of the room via the solitary, very small, air vent nearby. Almost as if the sound was being aimed towards that vent deliberately...

'Brothers of the Wing,' said Amaranth, 'I have filleted the Cradle to find the most powerful memories.'

'With the results?' said Aureolin.

'As we were told, it is the two women. They remember the Doctor most vividly of all. So very strongly...' And Amaranth played his instrument while Azure and Aureolin unfurled their massive wings and reached across the coffin to one another and held clawed-hands, bowing their heads as their associate strummed the Cradle again.

And the air around them shimmered and a hologram blurred into view, getting more crystal clear with every strum.

Azure hummed in time to the music and then spoke.

'The Cradle sings! Surround them with song. Tempt them with days long past – the memories must grow, if we are to succeed...'

The music flowed into the ventilation shaft as the three Shansheeth watched the hologram showing them Sarah Jane Smith and Jo Grant sat on the floor of Jo's tiny room. She had laid a pretty Tibetan rug down and they were sitting on each end of it, a variety of candles placed around them, the various aromas both clashing and combining to produce an atmosphere the two women found relaxing and freeing.

The Shansheeth too breathed in, as if the scents were coming through the same vent as their music was travelling down towards the women.

Jo and Sarah Jane had closed their eyes as the sounds from the Cradle wafted almost imperceptibly into the room.

Eventually Sarah Jane whispered to Jo that she could hear it.

Jo just nodded. 'It reminds me of another world the Doctor took me to,' she said. 'It was called Karfel and they had this Leisure Garden where the plants sung to you at night, like lullabies...'

And above the hologram the Shansheeth were watching another image blurring into clarity, showing a lush, beautiful garden, surrounded by beautiful reflective buildings, adorned with paintings and images. People in netted hats tended the gardens and insects and birds and...

'He took me to Italy,' Sarah Jane was saying. 'San Martino it was called, in 1492. I remember this magnificent

grove - it smelled of oranges and vanilla...'

And the image the Shansheeth were watching changed, this time into a Mediterranean orange grove, on to which the sun was shining, and a handsome young man was plucking an orange from a tree...

'Deeper,' Azure hissed as Amaranth's music grew louder. 'More memories...'

And in response words began falling from Sarah Jane and Jo, and the images the Shansheeth witnessed changed each time...

'Drashigs...'

And a massive multi-eyed reptile tore its way through marshland in Jo's memories...

'Cybermen,' said Sarah Jane as an image of Cybermen in an underground cavern took over...

'Axons,' Jo said, as beautiful golden people shimmered into view, replaced by a large ape-like creature with a gun as she said, 'Ogrons...'

Sarah Jane spoke of Zygons and Kraals and Raston Warrior Robots...

Jo mentioned Autons and Draconians and Sea Devils...

'Daleks!' both women said at the same time.

And the Shansheeth stared as the rapidly ever-changing memories being projected before them showed the galactic tyrants both women had faced – and helped defeat – more than once.

Azure's eyes blazed with victory at his associates. 'The trap has worked! Such excellent and sorrowful memories...'

Some minutes earlier, Clyde, Rani and Santiago had been disappointed to discover that this particular UNIT base didn't have a canteen and they hadn't even found a small kitchen to make tea in.

'Even a vending machine would've been nice,' Clyde complained.

Rani just threw an arm around her best friend. 'Cheer up, think how much more you'll look forward to one of Sarah Jane's cuppas when we get home.'

Clyde grimaced at the thought, and he explained to Santiago that Sarah Jane was the only person he'd ever met who could actually burn tea.

'How is that even possible?' Santiago asked.

Rani shrugged. 'Luke tried working that one out for months. Somehow, she manages it.'

'So we never let her near the toaster!' Clyde added. 'How many times have the fire brigade turned up?'

They laughed and then stopped. 'Poor Sarah Jane,' Rani said. 'Here we are larking about, talking about tea, and she's heartbroken about the Doctor.'

'She and my Gran didn't seem exactly heartbroken just now,' Santiago said. 'I don't think they believe he's dead at all. I never met him, but always wanted to – maybe take a trip in that TARDIS Gran's always talking about. Now it's probably too late.'

'I wish he was here right now,' muttered Clyde, staring at his hand.

'Yeah, me too,' said Rani.

But Clyde shook his head at her. 'No, I really wish he was here. Cos then maybe he could explain this.'

And he showed them both his right hand, which once again was surrounded by crackling blue energy, sparking off in all directions.

Rani glanced around, checking if any security cameras could see them. 'Clyde! It's happening again!'

'I know! Has been on and off since we left Bannerman Road! But I can't say anything, can I? UNIT'd lock me up, dissect me or something.'

Santiago frowned. 'Hang on guys. You said "again"?'

Clyde nodded. 'Last time we met the Doctor we got stuck in this time loop thing, and the TARDIS was phasing in and out of reality. I touched it and got zapped with this Artron energy – that's what the Doctor called it. Like I was part of the TARDIS.'

Santiago tried to lighten the mood slightly. 'Wow, and you two thought my life was good!'

But before Clyde could respond, a voice at his knee started muttering.

'Smelly getting stronger!'

It was the little blue Groske from earlier.

'What do you know about this stuff?' Clyde showed him his hand, which was getting a bit less sparkly now.

The Groske just shrugged and turned away. Then it looked back at Clyde and jabbed a finger upwards. 'Closer and closer!'

And it suddenly started running, really fast.

'Oi, come back here, Blue Boy,' Clyde shouted, following.

Santiago and Rani exchanged a look, and then headed off after the other two.

They caught up with Clyde around the corner, staring into one of the ventilation shafts at the foot of the wall. Clyde was starting to clamber into it, regardless of how tight a squeeze it would be.

'Clyde?' Rani exclaimed. 'What are you -'

Clyde cut her off. 'He's like a mouse in the skirting board.'

And Rani realised that the Groske must have dashed in there first.

'You two coming?' Clyde asked as he vanished into the ducting.

Rani started to follow, then looked back at Santiago.

'It'll be okay. We do this sort of thing all the time.'

Santiago was almost pushing Rani in and followed, grinning widely. He winked a big blue eye at her. 'My Gran once handcuffed herself to Robert Mugabe. This is nothing. I'm loving it!'

And all three teens followed the Groske in.

The metallic ventilation ducting was square, long and every so often jutted off in either left or right turns, meaning that every room in the base was probably linked to this central duct. Trouble was, each was identical and it was probably going to be very easy to get lost or confused if they took too many turns.

Clyde was at the front, Rani in the middle, Santiago bringing up the rear, all of them on all fours, palms and knees being the only way they could crawl forward, although the shiny metal surface made it quite quick to get along.

A few odd arrows stencilled on to the walls pointed in various directions, with numbers beneath them, but as they didn't know the layout of the UNIT base, they weren't much help.

And they'd lost sight of the Groske.

'Typical,' Clyde muttered. And then bellowed, 'Oi, Groskey, where are you?'

Rani slapped his bum from behind. 'Hey, your voice is probably echoing throughout the whole base. We don't want UNIT shooting us as spies!'

Although turning around wasn't possible, Clyde was able to turn his head and give Rani a look. 'Did you just hit my bum?'

'You were making noise,' she hissed.

'Don't hit my bum, okay?'

'Keep quiet then, "okay"?' she replied, trying not to laugh. Then she realised Clyde had stopped by another ventilation grille – a tiny one, not much bigger than his hand. 'Oh, and now all I can see is your bum. Thanks.'

'Shh a minute,' Clyde said.

'What is it?' asked Santiago.

But Clyde's attention was gripped by what he was seeing through the tiny grille.

It was the Funeral Chamber. With the three Shansheeth. And a hologram image floating in the air, showing Sarah Jane and Jo fast asleep on the floor of Jo's room. Or unconscious. Or...

'The women are named Smith, Sarah Jane and Jones, Josephine,' Azure was saying to the others.

Amaranth was away from his precious musical instrument now, and was standing next to Aureolin, staring at the image.

'We must drain their minds completely.'

Amaranth nodded. 'What of their bodies?'

Azure flexed his massive wings. 'They will die.' Then he gave what Clyde could only guess was a laugh. 'Fortunately there are excellent undertakers on hand.'

And all three Shansheeth laughed.

Sarah Jane had been right all along about them. And if she was right about them, perhaps she was right about the Doctor.

And if the Doctor was alive -

He never finished the thought, as suddenly the blue crackling energy chose that inappropriate moment to reappear around his hand, sending spectacular shards of blue light everywhere, lighting up the inside of the ducting.

Sure enough, Azure spotted it. And Clyde. 'We are witnessed!' he screeched.

Clyde yelled loudly now, any pretence at secrecy given up.

'Back up, back up,' he yelled.

'There's no room to turn around,' Santiago called back.

'Then shuffle backwards,' Rani suggested, and Santiago did as he was told, as fast as he could.

'Faster!' Clyde yelled, 'Shuffle for your life!'

At which point the ventilation grille where he'd been hunched a moment before was ripped away by Azure's beak, and tossed back into the Funeral Chamber with a clang.

The savage head was just the right size to ram through, so with eyes flaring in fury it saw the backward-shuffling teens.

'Stop!' Azure screamed. 'Stop the children!!!'

Chapter Seven

Sorry, Clyde

Whether it was that the music had stopped, the soporific candles had gone out, or some sixth sense said that her friends were in trouble, Sarah Jane awoke with a start. And something of a headache.

But she had been in enough tight spots in her time to know that two people who were talking one minute don't wake up flopped on the floor the next for no reason. That was something she'd picked up from the Doctor and could bet Jo would say the same.

She gently shook her new friend. 'Jo, wake up.'

Jo's eyes flickered open, focused on Sarah Jane, and then she sat bolt upright. 'What did we do?'

Sarah Jane shrugged. 'I don't know, but something seems weird.'

Jo looked at her watch. 'Santiago and the others should have been back ages ago.'

Sarah Jane nodded. 'I think something's definitely wrong.'

Jo smiled grimly. 'We always know when it is, don't we? Even after all these years.'

They crossed to the door and looked out into the empty corridor, 'Where is everyone?'

Jo joined her. 'Big base like this? This can't be right.'

'Trouble?' suggested Sarah Jane..

'D'you mean "trouble" as in a just-like-the-old-days sort of "trouble"?'

Sarah Jane laughed. 'Exactly like the old days.'

Jo grabbed Sarah Jane's hand. 'Groovy.' They both ran away down the corridor.

Rani and Santiago were back out in the corridor where they'd first gone into the ventilation shaft. Rani had her hand around the top of Clyde's trousers and was all but dragging him out.

'But what were they saying?' Santiago was asking.

Clyde was out. 'Later,' he said. 'First we need to get to Sarah Jane!'

He and the other two pelted down the corridors, turning left, then right.

'Where's everyone gone?' Rani yelled as they ran. 'We need to find Colonel Karim and tell her about the Shansheeth!'

'This way,' Santiago said. 'I remember coming through that door!'

Rani stared at the key coder. 'We need a code.'

Clyde stepped forward. 'Watch and learn,' he said. He tapped in 231163 and with a clunk, the door opened.

They were back in the vast car park area, but it was empty of vehicles, apart from the space shuttle-y things, and they'd be no use to them.

'Perhaps they're on a training exercise,' Santiago muttered.

'Yeah, but this is no use to us,' Rani said. 'We need to get back to the bedrooms and -'

But she never finished because Sarah Jane and Jo came full pelt down the corridor towards them and through the door.

'There you are,' Sarah Jane said, relieved.

And Clyde told them all what he'd seen and heard.

'Knew it!' said Sarah Jane.

'And if they were lying all along,' Jo added, 'that means the Doctor's still alive, right?'

'Of course I'm still alive, Jo. I'd have thought that was obvious. Keep up.'

They all turned and stared at Clyde, whose mouth was moving, but the voice he'd spoken with wasn't his. He looked as shocked as they did.

'I beg your pardon?' said Jo.

'Clyde?' Sarah Jane was piecing this together. 'That's not you, is it?'

Clyde's mouth moved again, but still it wasn't his voice. It was an older man's voice, a bit posher than Clyde's and very authoritative. 'Course it's not him, it's me! I'm using Clyde as a receiver – I've been keying into his residual Artron energy so I can organise a very complicated biological swap across ten thousand light years. Hold on –'

At which point the blue energy crackled not just on Clyde's hand but halfway up his arm now. 'That wasn't me speaking,' he said in his own voice. 'I'm getting all – whoa!' Clyde was staring at his hand that the energy had been around.

And everyone else was staring too – because it was a much larger hand than Clyde's. And white... 'This is so not good...' he started to say, but in a blue flash, he vanished.

And in his place was a man who seemed to be about ten years older than Clyde, a lot taller, in a tweed jacket, tight black trousers, boots and a bow tie over his white shirt. His hair was brown and untidy but his eyes...his eyes burned blue with piercing intelligence.

And he smiled. 'Sorry, Clyde -'

There was another blue electrical flash, and Clyde was back.

'Waaaah!' Clyde was yelling, before he vanished again and was replaced by the older man.

'This -' and he was gone.

'Ouch,' said Clyde as he reappeared, shook himself and vanished again.

'Space -' said the man. And then he was gone. Again.

This happened a couple more times. First Clyde appeared, then the man, then Clyde, all occupying the same space in the corridor.

Finally the man settled. 'This space is taken.'

And he stayed.

And Clyde didn't come back.

'Oooh,' he said, running his hands through his mass of hair. 'So. Gosh. That was different.' And he grinned widely at the others, who all stared at him in shock. 'Hullo everyone.'

'Who are you?' yelled Rani. 'What have you done with Clyde?'

'Come on, Rani,' he said. 'Use your brain. Clyde and I swapped places, yes? You saw that. I'm where he was and he's where I was...oh. Oh. Oh, that means he's in a lot of trouble right now...'

Ten thousand light years away, on an empty, dull rocky planet, covered in cold, damp mists and not a lot else, Clyde stood shivering. 'Oi!' he yelled. 'Someone? Anyone?'

Back on Earth, inside the UNIT base in Mount Snowdon, Sarah Jane was staring at the man who stood in Clyde's place.

Rani was yelling at him to bring Clyde back, but Sarah Jane held up a hand to hush her. 'Don't you see, Rani?'

Rani just stared at her and shrugged in dismay.

Sarah Jane reached out and put her hand to the side of the newcomer's face and smiled, so, so happily. 'You've done it again, haven't you? Doctor?'

And the Doctor took her hand. 'Hullo, Sarah Jane.'

'That's the Doctor?' said Rani incredulously.

'What Doctor?' asked Jo. 'The Doctor?' My Doctor?'

'He can change his face,' Sarah Jane said quietly. 'His whole physical form.'

Jo nodded. 'Oh, I know about regeneration,' she said. 'But into a baby?'

The Doctor laughed. The last time Jo had seen him, he'd been in his...what would it have been? Oh yes. His third body. Tall, grey-haired, dynamic and bright, like a light bulb that never turned off. He'd always quite liked that body.

'Imagine it from my point of view,' he said to Jo. 'Last time I saw you, you were what? Twenty-one? Twenty-two?' He took her hand, too. 'What a marvellous life you must have led! Look at you – older, wiser and been out in the sun a lot. Looks like someone's baked you!'

Jo stared in mock shock at him, and then gave him a huge hug.

After a few seconds, the Doctor unwrapped her from him. 'So, what's going on exactly?' he asked.

'Umm...ask them?' Santiago suggested.

And the Doctor turned to see that behind him, the three Shansheeth were entering the huge empty car park.

He adjusted his bow tie and stepped towards them. 'Yes, right. The Claw Shansheeth of the Fifteenth Funeral Fleet.'

Azure stepped ahead of the other two. 'I am Azure of the Claw Shansheeth. I'm sorry for your loss.'

'Blimey,' the Doctor muttered. 'It's like hearing Eeyore on a bad day. When he's got toothache. Cheerful lot, aren't you? Now then, I've been looking for you. Have you been telling my friends that I'm dead?'

Azure bowed his long neck slightly. 'I apologise. The Death Notice was released a little too early.'

Amaranth stepped forward. 'Though we can rectify this.' Aureolin stepped forward too. 'Immediately.'

And all three Shansheeth unfurled their wings and rose slowly, almost majestically, into the air and circled the group below.

And all three pointed forwards and down at the Doctor with their twisted clawed hands.

'We are so sorry for your loss,' they said in unison and a blast of savage red energy erupted from their combined talons and hit the Doctor squarely in the chest, sending him crashing to the floor and across the ground.

He tried to get up, but a second blast floored him. Sarah Jane and the others could only gasp in horror as he tried to stagger away, but he could only get onto one knee before a third blast floored him completely.

Azure flew down so low his talons almost shredded the back of the Doctor's jacket.

'Rest. In. Peace!' he screeched at the fallen Time Lord.

Chapter Eight

Come along, Smith

Clyde was standing alone. Lost. And it was really quite cold and getting dark. He looked into the alien sky, trying to see where the stars were, but the mist was so low, so thick, that he couldn't see more than about thirty feet in the air.

After a few moments, the mist parted and Clyde could see part of the night sky. The moon, he could see the moon! He felt a brief feeling of joy as the light moved across the landscape. Then he saw something astonishing – there was a second moon. Slightly bigger than the first.

He wasn't on Earth, because Earth certainly didn't have two moons.

'Thanks, Doctor,' he muttered. 'My first alien planet, and no one around to share it with.'

He shivered.

He listened to see if he could hear anyone or anything else in the area. Something, anything, that would give him someone to talk to, to maybe find out where he was.

But there was nothing except a slight electrical chime coming from back where he'd first arrived. 'Should've stayed put,' he said out loud. Anything to break the silence.

Moving back to where he'd first appeared, he realised the mist had lifted slightly and now he could see a tall, thin device, shaped like a small, skinny missile.

A missile?

Clyde held his breath. Was it a bomb about to go off? Veep. Veep. Veep.

A small blue light was flashing up and down the device in time with the "veeping" sound.

Was this a countdown?

'Doctor...what have you got me into?'

At which moment, Clyde found himself back in the UNIT car park, on the floor.

He looked up – the Shansheeth were flying! Above him! He looked across, and saw the astonished Sarah Jane, Rani and the others.

'But I was on a planet...' he said.

'Never mind that,' Sarah Jane yelled, 'Get up and run!'

Clyde didn't need telling twice and he followed the rest of the gang back into the thin corridor.

'They can't fly down after us!' Santiago yelled.

But he was wrong – the Shansheeth were now on their sides, their wing tips just missing the floor and ceilings of the UNIT corridor as they expertly glided down it, screeching their awful noise as they pursued them.

Sarah Jane pushed open the door to her bedroom. 'In, in, in!' she yelled.

And then stopped. Instead of Clyde, she was again facing the Doctor.

'Come along, Smith,' he smiled and pulled her into the room.

'Sarah Jane, Jo, Rani, pretty boy whose name I don't know, all here, marvellous!' The Doctor was counting them off as they went into the room.

He went to slam the door shut, but a female UNIT officer was suddenly standing there.

'I'm sorry,' she was saying, 'is there a problem?'

The Doctor slammed the door in her face. Then he reopened it just a crack. 'Sorry,' he said quietly, 'that was rude of me. Nevertheless...' and he slammed the door again.

He turned to face the others. 'Need to lock the door.'

'Sonic screwdriver?' suggested Jo, relishing saying the words again.

'Don't have it on me,' he said. Then looked at Sarah Jane. 'Sonic lipstick?'

Sarah Jane got it out of her pocket and zapped the door.

'They do sonic lipsticks now?' asked an incredulous Jo.

'We're running out of time,' the Doctor said. 'Clyde and I keep swapping places.'

'We noticed,' Rani said.

'I need you, Sarah Jane. And you, Jo.' And he grabbed both their hands.

'What do you need me for?' Jo asked him.

'Remember the days when we'd go zooming off to faraway worlds?'

Jo nodded.

And they all vanished in a blue flash.

Rani and Santiago found themselves facing an astonished Clyde again.

'I feel space-sick,' Clyde said.

Rani reached forward to steady him. 'Where were you?'

Clyde took a deep breath. 'I was on another planet.' And he grinned. 'Another planet! Wow! That's just sunk in!'

Santiago crossed to the door. 'Someone's outside,' he whispered. 'I think it's that Colonel woman.'

There was a tap on the door, and then Colonel Karim's voice came from outside.

'I'm sorry? Can I help you in there? Is something wrong?'

Santiago went to open the door but Rani pulled him away, shaking her head.

'But she's on our side, isn't she?'

'Think about it,' said Rani. 'The Doctor avoided her, but why? Because someone inside UNIT had to fake the DNA results - Colonel Karim! She must be in league with the Shansheeth!'

At which point there was a crash as the ventilation grille in the corner of the room fell to the floor, and the little blue Groske was there.

'Hurry, hurry,' he said urgently. 'Follow me!'

And once again, the three teens found themselves following the diminutive alien into the maze of metallic ducting.

Outside in the corridor, Colonel Karim had her ear pressed to the door, and then she moved back and faced the three Shansheeth, now with wings folded, looking malevolently at the door, as if wishing their stares could burn through it to the people within.

'They have powers unforeseen,' Azure said.

Karim nodded. 'Not as daft as they look, for two batty pensioners and a bunch of ASBO kids.'

'How did they summon the Doctor?' was Amaranth's question, but Karim had no answer. 'Good thing I had the base cleared, sent everyone away on manoeuvres, otherwise half this base would be asking the same question! And you lot flying around, screaming your heads off, aren't helping. Now, all I can do is shut the place off completely, activate all the internal security measures for a few hours and keep this lot trapped. And while I'm doing that, you should go and get everything prepared in the Funeral Chamber.'

The Shansheeth looked at one another and then with a defiant sweep of his cloak, Azure led them away.

Shaking her head and then throwing a last angry look towards the door, Colonel Karim headed after the aliens.

Chapter Nine

A madman with a box

Sarah Jane was staring at the misty sky, just as Clyde had moments before. It was an alien sky, seen from an alien world. With two moons. And constellations above of kinds she had never imagined before.

Then she bent down and scooped up a handful of the dusty ground, letting the particles trickle through her fingers. All around were the remnants of things that might have once been crashed spaceships. Or rockets. Or something. They were old, rusted and pitted, so whatever disaster had befallen them had happened a long time ago.

She glanced over at Jo, who was still staring upwards, her face reflecting the same thrills that Sarah Jane was feeling.

Jo realised she was being stared at and looked back at Sarah Jane, a massive grin on her face.

It was infectious and Sarah Jane smiled too, before letting it break into a small whoop of joy.

'An alien world,' she said.

'A different planet,' agreed Jo.

'Two moons!' they said together.

'I never thought I'd do this again,' Sarah Jane called over to the Doctor. 'Thank you!'

The Doctor was crouched down by the missile-like device, which was flashing blue in rapid increments.

'Welcome to the Wasteland of the Crimson Heart. Glad you like it,' he said, while trying to prise a panel off the device. 'Can I borrow you and your lipstick please?'

Sarah Jane was at his side in an instant, sonic aiming at an area he was indicating with his finger.

'Zap there, please.'

She zapped.

'And there.'

Zap.

'And...there.'

Zap.

Sarah Jane looked at this new Doctor, who carried himself so confidently one minute, and at another, resembled a new-born Bambi, all arms and legs flapping madly in the wind, wide eyes staring around, trying to take everything in. And yet, behind those same eyes, burned the passion and experience of the same old Doctor she'd known in a variety of bodies over the last thirty or so years.

'Did it hurt?'

The Doctor looked at Sarah Jane, frowning. 'Did what hurt?'

'Regeneration. That last body of yours...was he okay, in the end?'

'It always hurts. And there, please.'

Zap.

'So, how'd you end up here?' Sarah Jane gesticulated around them. 'This world?'

The Doctor stopped working and stood up. 'The Shansheeth lured me. Mighty old battlefield, just begging to be explored. Sounds interesting, so I headed here after dropping Amy and Rory off.'

'Amy and Rory?'

'Who I'm travelling with. They got married, so I dropped them off at a honeymoon planet...which isn't what you think. It's not a planet *for* a honeymoon, it's a planet *on* a honeymoon – it married an asteroid! But then they nicked the TARDIS. The Shansheeth, not Amy and Rory. Fortunately, once stranded on this planet, I managed to find bits and bobs and build this space-swapping-doo-dah.'

Jo, who had sat down on a boulder a little way back, looked over with a sad frown on her face. 'So, you've got a married couple in the TARDIS?'

'Mr and Mrs Pond!'

And Jo sighed. 'I only left you cos I got married.'

The Doctor looked down at his feet and closed his eyes for a second, then guided Sarah Jane's hand holding the sonic lipstick back towards the device. 'And another zap there.'

But Sarah Jane didn't zap. She was looking at poor Jo.

'Did you think I was stupid?' Jo asked quietly.

The Doctor turned to look at her, then walked over. 'Why d'you say that?'

Jo shrugged. 'Well, I suppose I was a bit blonde. A bit dumb. Still am, I suppose.'

The Doctor waved his hands around, as if trying to work out what to say to that. He settled on a quite heartfelt, 'What in the world makes you think that? Ever? Ever??'

She looked up at him, as if trying to see the face of the Doctor she knew behind the current one. 'Cliff and I, we'd been travelling along the Amazon for months after we'd married. And we got to this village in Cristalino, the only place with a phone for a thousand miles and I phoned you. I thought I had to say hello. And they said you'd gone, left UNIT one day and never came back. So I waited. Because you said you'd see me again – you did, I asked and you said yes. You promised. So I thought one day I'll hear that noise again. One day! Deep in the jungle, that funny wheezing and groaning noise and there was gonna be a big blue box standing in the rainforest, because he wouldn't just leave. Not forever. And not me.'

Jo took a big breath, and Sarah Jane's heart broke a little, because Jo was doing her very best not to get more

upset, not to cry in front of this fantastic, amazing man, who had contributed so much to their lives.

Jo looked the Doctor right in the eye. 'I waited all my life.'

For a long time, the Doctor didn't move, not even a blink. Then he suddenly clapped his hands together, the sound echoing across the deserted alien world.

'Oh, Jo, you are an idiot!'

'Well,' Jo shrugged, 'there you are then.'

And the Doctor was on his knees in front of her. This much older woman whose early twenties had been shaped and directed so much by the Doctor, and who had lived so much afterwards.

Just like Sarah Jane, who knew exactly what the Doctor was going to say next. Because she had asked herself those same questions some years ago, before meeting up with him again. And although she'd never had it spelled out to her, she had realised. The Doctor never forgot anyone, never abandoned anyone.

'Don't you see?' he said, taking Jo's small hands in his large ones. 'How could I ever find you? You've spent the last thirty-five years living in huts, and climbing trees, and tearing down barricades. You've done everything from flying kites on Kilimanjaro to sailing down the Yangtze in a tea chest! Not even the TARDIS could pin you down!'

'But I -' Jo started, then paused, before her eyes widened further. 'Hang on, I did sail down the Yangtze in a tea chest! How do you know that?'

'And that family,' the Doctor laughed. 'All seven kids and twelve grandchildren, thirteenth on the way. He's dyslexic by the way, but that'll be fine – great swimmer.'

'Do you mean, all this time, you've been watching me?'

The Doctor shook his head slowly, released Jo's hands and stood up, taking in both his old friends. 'No. Because you're right, I don't look back. I can't. But the last time I was...dying, I did look in on all of you. Every single one. And I was so proud.'

And a tear trickled down Jo's cheek, but it was a tear of happiness, and she was smiling her biggest, hugest smile.

And Sarah Jane was smiling too. Because she had actually seen the Doctor that last time, before his tenth body transmuted into this, his eleventh. She had seen him in Bannerman Road, seconds after saving Luke from being hit by a car.

And she had known, then, that he was saying goodbye, even though he hadn't said a word. It had just been a look. An understanding that time and space could never break.

'Anyway,' she said. 'We've got that lot back at home, with the Shansheeth on their tails!'

The Doctor spun round, arms flailing as he started to think. 'Yes, yes, yes. And Jo, I need you. In that bag of yours – I can smell blackcurrant. Is it buchu oil?'

'Hand picked in Mozambique,' she said, pulling a small bottle out of her bag and holding it towards him.

'Perfect. These circuits need conductivity...' and he was back at the strange device, taking the bottle from Jo at the same time and unscrewing it, trickling a small amount on to some circuits, the ones Sarah Jane had been about to zap with the sonic lipstick earlier.

'Sarah Jane?'

She zapped it and the whole device suddenly lit up properly, and the beeping noise cut out, replaced by a steady, healthy hum.

He grinned at his two former companions. 'What a team,' he yelled. 'We are brilliant!' He punched a couple of buttons. 'There, that should work.' He stood back proudly. 'Intergalactic molecular streaming, with just a hint of blackcurrant current.' He laughed. 'Blackcurrant current?' Did you like that? No? No. Right, won't say that again.'

'But what'll happen to Clyde?' Sarah Jane asked.

'Ah, fixed that! All I needed was you two. Oil and sonic. You could be a TV detective team. Oil and Sonic Investigations! Ha!'

They just gave him a look.

'Okay, maybe not that either. Anyway, we can get back, and Clyde will stay where he is. Now, hold tight.'

And he gripped a hand of each of them. Tight. And squeezed. And grinned a marvellous grin that reminded them both of how much they loved, trusted and adored this madman with a box.

And all three of them vanished in a blue flash.

Chapter Ten

Trapped

In the Funeral Chamber Azure was giving orders to his fellow Shansheeth. 'Dispense with the coffin, prepare this room for the coalescence.'

Amaranth and Aureolin gave the vast lead coffin a shove and it ended up by the drapes at the back that separated the main Chamber from their private, hidden area.

Azure then drew the drapes aside, revealing the Doctor's TARDIS.

Colonel Karim walked into the Chamber and smiled. 'I always love seeing that in my possession.'

Azure gave her a look. 'It is a possession of the Claw Shansheeth.'

Karim was about to give a reply, then decided not to. After all, once the plan was in motion, getting the TARDIS away from the Shansheeth was going to be easy. Stupid vultures – they had no idea what she could do.

'Behold,' Amaranth announced, 'the Memory Weave is ready.'

He had moved an upright medical stretcher next to the Cradle. There were retractable straps and arm and leg clamps on it. And close to the top was a small dome that could fit over a human head, with a spaghetti of different coloured wires running from that into a small portable computer console about the size of a chest of drawers. This contained a screen and a series of switches and dials.

Aureolin had an identical set-up on the other side of the room.

Karim opened a small square cut into the floor, which revealed a power supply with flexible cabling and linked first Amaranth's and then Aureolin's to the main UNIT power grid. That done, she glanced at her watch.

'We have about an hour before the base fills up with personnel again,' she snapped. 'You said we'd be finished by now.'

Azure flexed his wings angrily. 'And you said we'd have the memories by now.'

Karim closed her eyes and imagined a huge oven, like her one at home but massive, and inside it, three large birds slowly roasting. She forced a smile on to her face. 'Hopefully the Doctor will bring them back soon, we can get the key to the TARDIS and be done.'

Azure stared at her – was that contempt she could see in his eyes? 'Soon the Memory Weave will be active. Deliver the women to our wings, and not even the Doctor will be able to stop the crusade of the Shansheeth.'

Karim had heard it all before and it was starting to get repetitive. The same promises and pronouncements over the last few months.

She turned back to the door but before leaving, pointed to the connected-up Memory Weaves. 'Don't overheat those things with power. When UNIT first got their hands on them, we left one of them plugged in for too long. That's why we only have two now.'

And she marched out, slamming the Chamber doors behind her.

Stupid Shansheeth. If she'd known when she was first contacted by them just how frustrating they could be, she'd never have agreed to all this.

Actually, that was a lie, she reminded herself. Because she wanted the TARDIS as much as they did – if not for the same reasons. The Shansheeth wanted its secrets, its timetravelling capabilities for their own, frankly insipid reasons. Noble in some respects, perhaps, but wasteful. So that didn't interest her. In return for her help in getting it, the Shansheeth had promised to take her out there, into space and time. All these years working her way up through UNIT, doing demeaning jobs, being posted to stupid backward countries, protecting idiot dignitaries when all the stuff UNIT had gathered over the years was theirs to use! But no, stupid rules and regulations forbade the use of alien artefacts and stuff.

How ridiculous was that? She had known when she was ten that Tia Karim was destined for a better life and UNIT had promised it. But it had let her down with its placid, reactive rather than proactive, attitudes. How was the human race supposed to grow in strength and power if it didn't use the gifts and trophies it found? Stupid politicians with their small-minded perspectives. But out there, out in space amongst those aliens, she could show them how powerful one person could be. And with the TARDIS at her command, once the Shansheeth were out of the picture...the universe was hers for the taking.

The Colonel took a small device from her pocket. On it glowed an illuminated map of the whole base. A red dot showed where she was standing, and a small cluster of dots nearby were the Shansheeth. Which meant that other small cluster, working their way through the ventilation ducts, must be those stupid kids.

She tapped a button on the device and a line went across one of the ducts.

Tap. Another line.

'Time to box you lot in,' she muttered.

Clyde, Rani, Santiago and the Groske were staring in horror at the metal panel that had just slammed across the ducting in front of them, cutting off the route ahead.

'That's not good,' Clyde said.

'Trapped,' the Groske said.

'Great,' said Clyde. 'Back the way we came?'

At which point another panel crashed down, cutting off that way too. Clyde looked at the Groske. 'So what exactly was your plan?'

'No plan. Shansheeth scary. Groske hide. Humans hide, too.'

Clyde sighed. 'No plan. Oh, great.'

Rani shrugged. 'Hiding made sense actually,' she said. 'We need to keep you safe because whatever the Doctor's doing, he needs you safe for that body switcheroo thing.'

Clyde waved around. 'Yeah, but in here, if he arrives, splat – there's not a great deal of space now.'

Santiago laughed quietly. 'I can't believe you do this all the time. Aliens and chases and stuff.'

'You can talk, mate,' said Clyde. 'Going off to Paraguay and Mount Everest.'

'You just went to another planet!'

Clyde laughed too. 'Yeah, there is that.'

'We've been to parallel worlds. Nightmare dimensions. Limbo. And if we're lucky, home for tea. We see all this stuff and then Mum's like, "What did you do today?" and I'm like, "Not much. Went to the library."

"Played footie with Steve, Finney and the guys." 'Clyde smiled.

"Stayed behind at drama club." They always like that one! said Rani.

'And of course what we can't say is, "Oh, and Mum, I fought off a platoon of Judoon from the moon in my spare time," cos our parents'd freak.'

Santiago nodded slowly, then said, without a smile, 'Haven't seen my mum for six months.'

Rani frowned. 'How come?'

'She's in Japan, organising a rally. I mean, that's brilliant, it's really important.'

'Course it is, yeah,' encouraged Clyde.

'But before that, she was in Africa finding shell-flower plants. And Dad's with the Gay Fathers Organisation, hiking across Antarctica, so we haven't been together since about...April.'

'When are you going to see them next?'

Santiago shrugged. 'I know they're going to be at some anti-nuclear rally in Norway in a few weeks but Gran needs to get back to Granddad soon, and I've got a cousin on the way in Dubai. Still, at least that'll be warm.'

'Talking of warm...' Clyde rested his hands on the ventilation ducting floor. 'Is it me, or...?'

The Groske jumped and immediately banged his head on the low ceiling. 'Hot too,' he pointed up. 'Hot, hot, hot!'
Rani grabbed Clyde. 'They're trying to boil us!'

Chapter Eleven

Activate the memory weave

Colonel Karim strode back into the Funeral Chamber, holding her device up. 'Excellent. I've got the Brady Bunch exactly where we need them, getting a bit hot under the collar.'

Azure looked up from one of the Memory Weave consoles. 'The children are irrelevant.'

Karim sighed at their lack of imagination. 'Not to the Doctor, they're not,' she said, slowly, hoping that spelled it out to the Shansheeth. 'Wherever he is, he'll be planning something. So we need to divert his attention.'

And she ran her finger up the device, increasing the heating in the ducting walls...and then smiled as three new dots appeared suddenly on the screen. 'Gotcha,' she said.

In the bedroom allocated to Sarah Jane, where they had been standing before being zapped off to that alien planet, the Doctor, Sarah Jane and Jo Jones had popped back into existence in a blue flash.

'They're not here,' said Sarah Jane, meaning the teens.

'Help!' came a voice.

'That's Rani!'

The Doctor whirled around the room, taking it all in properly for the first time and then his eyes settled on the ventilation grille lying on the floor where the Groske had, unknown to the Doctor, shoved it earlier.

'Ventilation shafts,' he said delightedly. 'That takes me back. Or forwards.' And he kneeled down and crawled in. 'Hold on!' he yelled. 'We're coming!'

'Doctor!' That was Clyde. 'We're getting roasted!'

The Doctor touched the walls. Warm. 'Must be hotter further on,' he said to Sarah Jane and Jo behind him, without turning around. Because he couldn't.

But there was no reply.

'Sarah Jane?'

Nothing.

'Jo?'

Nothing.

Which meant they were in trouble – probably that UNIT Colonel and her Shansheeth friends.

But who to help? His old friends or the teenagers trapped in a rapidly heating-up shaft?

It was getting hotter where he was too. But why weren't Clyde and the others coming towards him?

He noticed slits in the walls. 'Shutters. In case of fire. Gaaah!'

Decision made – he had to get to the youngsters who were almost certainly trapped behind a shutter.

Clever Colonel Wotsername, she knew how to press his buttons!

He scurried forwards as quickly as he could, hands and knees, feeling the increasing heat as he got closer to the calling voices.

'Clyde? Rani? Jo's grandson whose name I never got?' he yelled.

'Doctor!'

He turned a sharp left and ahead was a closed hatchway.

No sonic screwdriver, and Sarah Jane still had her lipstick with her.

'Brute force it is then,' he muttered, and pushed his palms against the heated panel. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, focusing on the panel, and with one mighty shove, it lifted a fraction.

Clyde's fingers immediately appeared underneath, followed by a series of complaints about how hot it was.

Adding both their strengths, the panel didn't stand a chance and it lifted and returned to its slot in the wall.

The Doctor found himself face to face with Clyde.

'Blimey,' Clyde said. 'You really have changed your face. Couldn't see before, what with all the body-swapping and stuff.'

'Good to see you,' the Doctor grinned.

'Oi!' yelled Rani. 'Still cooking back here!'

'And where's my Gran?' came another voice.

'Right, yes, sorry,' the Doctor stammered. 'She's in danger.' Actually, that probably wasn't a wise thing to say, he chastised himself silently. 'So, we'd better...oh, can't turn round.'

'You have to sort of shuffle backwards,' Clyde pointed behind the Doctor.

So the Doctor did, as fast as he could.

Clyde moved forward, face to face with the Doctor. 'Even your eyes are different,' he said as they scurried. 'Weird. I thought the eyes would stay the same. Can you change colour? Or are you always white?'

'I can be anything,' the Doctor said, slightly breathlessly. Going backwards at speed wasn't that easy.

'And is there a limit?'

'Limit?'

'Yeah; how many times can you change?'

'Five hundred and seven,' the Doctor said, feeling his feet in the larger space of the bedroom now. He popped out and quickly all but dragged Clyde, then Rani, then Jo's grandson, Santiago (the Doctor shook his hand as he introduced himself), then – 'Oh, hullo,' he said. 'A Groske. How nice!'

The Groske jumped out. 'No smell anymore,' he said to Clyde.

'That's comforting,' Clyde muttered.

'Listen,' snapped Santiago.

There was a hum, steadily rising, coming from some way away.

Rani touched the bedroom door. 'Vibrating.'

'That's a lot of power building up,' the Doctor said, yanking the door open and pelting off in the direction of the noise. Towards the Funeral Chamber!

Inside the Chamber, Colonel Karim was operating the computer console for one of the Memory Weaves, into which Sarah Jane was strapped.

On the opposite side of the room, Jo was strapped into the other one, and Aureolin was placing the wired-up helmet on her head, while Azure operated the controls.

Amaranth fitted Sarah Jane's helmet.

'I never trusted you, Colonel,' Sarah Jane said.

Karim raised her eyes heavenwards. 'Like I care. Frankly, I've never met anyone so staggeringly pious in all my life.'

'The Doctor will stop you,' Sarah Jane said.

Karim sighed. 'Oh, give it a rest. The doors are sealed. This room was originally designed as a bunker in case Mount Snowdon, and this base specifically, was attacked. He'd need so much dynamite to blow those doors apart, he'd bring the mountain down on his head first.'

- Jo, however, was staring at the TARDIS, the lead coffin lying discarded to one side of it.
- 'I never thought I'd ever see the TARDIS again,' she breathed.

'That's what this is all about,' the Colonel said to her from across the room. 'The TARDIS and you two.' She looked at Azure. 'Activate the Memory Weave.' Azure flicked a switch with his great talons, and Colonel Karim did the same on her console.

And simultaneously, they turned similar dials. The hum got louder.

'So, come on then,' Sarah Jane said bravely. 'What does a Memory Weave do?'

'Cos I warn you, sweetheart,' Jo said, just as bravely, 'at my age, the memory's going.'

'You only need to remember one thing,' said Amaranth, now strumming the Cradle again. 'The TARDIS key.'

Karim explained. 'The Weave takes the memory out of your head and makes it real. It weaves matter – a physical key from your thoughts.'

'And then,' Azure said, extending his massive wings in victory, 'we will have access to the TARDIS! The most miraculous machine in creation. And it shall be ours!'

'But you mustn't,' Jo said.

Azure ignored her. 'We have seen so much death. The Claw Shansheeth have presided over infinite funerals. We see the pain, and the suffering, again and again and again. But with the TARDIS we can stop this, we can intervene to prevent such loss of life on a universal scale. A noble quest to stop the endless, endless weeping.'

'You're going to stop death?' Sarah Jane was appalled. 'That'll change the whole of history. That's why creatures like you can't have time machines, you'd wreck the entire universe.'

Colonel Karim threw Sarah Jane a look. 'What did I say? Pious.'

But Sarah Jane was furious. 'I'd rather be pious than vile. Talking of which, what do you get out of this, Colonel?'

'A bigger horizon. Cos there's nothing for me on Earth anymore. So the Shansheeth are going to take me to the stars.' And with a cruel smile, she turned the dial up more.

At which point a furious hammering began on the door, from outside. Then a voice - the Doctor's, calling their

names anxiously.

'They want the TARDIS key,' Sarah Jane bravely called out to him. 'They've got your TARDIS and a Memory Weave!'

'You're too late out there,' Karim yelled, her voice cracking slightly, a tone of mild hysteria in it. She was getting stressed as her plan neared completion. 'You can't stop us...me!'

And she turned her dials up further.

Azure did the same, as Amaranth strummed the Cradle and the Memory Weave power throbbed and throbbed, louder and louder.

'Concentrate,' Azure demanded. 'Think of the key!'

'I've got the original key in my pocket.' The Doctor's voice came from outside in the corridor. 'You can have it if you let them go.'

The Shansheeth looked at one another.

'Don't be stupid,' Karim spat at them. 'Let him inside this room and he'll destroy us! Keep going!'

She ramped the dial up more and Sarah Jane finally cried out in pain.

'Think of the TARDIS,' said Azure.

'Think of the key,' said Aureolin.

'Remember,' said Amaranth, strumming faster and louder.

And Sarah Jane flinched, trying not to remember.

But images formed in the air, created by the power of the Cradle's music, showing her memories: being inside the Tenth Doctor's coral TARDIS, with Rose and Mickey. And Martha. And Donna. And of course, Captain Jack Harkness. The Fourth Doctor's TARDIS, as she said her goodbye, walking out on to the cold streets of Aberdeen, watching that door close behind her.

Other times outside the TARDIS - the South Pole, the realm of Mandragora, Zeta Minor, Nerva Beacon, Peladon, Exxilon...

So many memories...

And Jo was doing the same, another hologram in the air, showing her memories of the key in use. Inter Minor, the realm of Kronos, Skybase One, Peladon, Uxaerius...

'The memories coalesce!' said Amaranth gleefully.

'The key...it takes shape,' Aureolin announced.

'Can't...stop...' Sarah Jane cried, watching as her memories, her beautiful, amazing, treasured, precious memories were used against her will, creating a duplicate TARDIS key in the air before her. 'How...dare...you?' she cried at Karim, who just laughed cruelly, and her eyes blazed in triumph as the key started to solidify!

Out in the corridor, the Doctor was concentrating.

'There's no other way in?' he asked the Groske. 'No ventilation duct?'

'Not big enough,' the Groske said. 'Just air vents.'

Clyde grabbed a fire extinguisher off the wall and slammed it against the door with all his might, but it didn't even scratch it.

Santiago then kicked angrily at the sealed door. 'Need a bulldozer,' he said.

Rani was looking around. 'Maybe there's a fire axe or something?'

'There isn't,' the Doctor said sadly. 'And it wouldn't do any good – that door's built to withstand a lot.'

'Then what can we do?' she replied.

He looked at the three faces of the humans in front of him: anxious, terrified, alarmed...all hoping he would come up with something.

And the little Groske, sadly standing apart from them.

The Doctor loved humans – these three kids were fantastic, determined, never giving up, with total belief that they could rescue Sarah Jane and Jo. It was why he loved humans, why he always remembered to have one travelling with him because –

'Memories! They are using Sarah Jane and Jo's memories!' He yelled.

'We know!'

'Then don't you see? We do exactly the same!' He yelled through the door. 'Sarah Jane! Jo! Listen to me!'

'The key...' That was Jo.

'It's almost solid...' That was Sarah Jane.

And the Doctor spoke so softly and yet powerfully that there was no doubt his voice would carry into the room.

Clyde shivered. It was like the air in the corridor had stopped moving, like the whole world was suddenly still.

Even the throbbing of the Memory Weave within the sealed room seemed to drop, as if it too was somehow listening to the Doctor's voice.

'Listen to me. Both of you. I want you to remember everything. Every day with me. Every single second. Let those memories come, stop fighting the Weave. Because your memories are more powerful than anything else on this entire planet. Give the Memory Weave everything! Every planet. Every face. Every madman. Every loss. Every sunset, every scent, every terror, every joy. Every Doctor. Every me!'

Inside the Funeral Chamber, Karim was at the controls, but the Weave seemed to be operating by itself, the power getting stronger, feeding...feeding off the memories!

'What's he doing?' she screamed at Azure, but the big vulture was as confused as her.

'I remember,' said Sarah Jane beside the Colonel.

'I remember,' echoed Jo, next to Aureolin.

And on their holograms faces, planets, creatures flashed by, like a speeded-up movie.

Daleks. Cybermen. Ice Warriors. Sontarans. Morbius. Azal. Krillitanes. Karfelons. Autons. Arcturans. Arcateenians. Bok. Wirrn. Eldrad. Omega. The Master. Davros. The Brigadier. K-9. Mike. Harry. Draconia. Kastria. So many faces,

so many sounds, so many smells, so many temperatures, so many memories...

Karim pointed as the key, that had been so nearly solid, just melted into nothingness as these other memories poured out from the two women strapped into the Memory Weave.

A squawk from Azure made the Colonel stare at her console. Smoke was seeping out from under it. 'What's happening?'

Azure's great wings began flapping. 'The device is overloading. Too many memories. Too many -'

Another cry – this time from Amaranth, because the Cradle's strings had snapped, rending the instrument useless, and he staggered back from it, his talons flailing around in fear and bewilderment.

Outside, the Doctor turned to the teenagers.

'Come on, all of you! Help them!'

Clyde was first to the door, yelling at the top of his voice. 'Think of us, Sarah Jane! Remember Maria. And her dad! And all the stuff we've done. Slitheen, the Gorgon...'

'And the clowns,' Rani was yelling. 'And the Judoon. And the Berserker! And the Mona Lisa coming alive!'

'Just think, Gran,' Santiago was shouting. 'All the places we've been to. All the countries, all the people...'

Inside, Jo was smiling as she thought about all the tribes she had visited, all the rivers, and mountains, and deserts and jungles she'd seen. With Cliff, her husband. And their children. And their children...

And Sarah Jane was thinking about Bannerman Road, finding Mister Smith's Xylok crystal, creating the computer. Of the Bane. Of Luke. Luke, her son...

And then the holograms just vanished and the console beside Jo exploded in a huge mass of sparks and flashes, throwing Aureolin backwards.

'It's blown a circuit,' Sarah Jane said. The straps holding her arms and legs sprung open as the power drained away. She ripped the headset away and was across to Jo, pulling her free, ignoring the explosions around them, almost dragging Jo towards the door, to the Doctor, to freedom.

But the door was sealed.

'Doctor!' Sarah Jane shouted. 'Problem! The door's sealed and this place is about to go up!'

Jo glanced back. The whole place was a mass of smoke and flame and she drew Sarah Jane's attention to the power cables leading into the floor. One of them was already ablaze – and when that reached whatever was powering this place beneath the floor...

Colonel Karim saw this too and threw herself forward, preparing to yank the power cable out.

Jo and Sarah Jane hid their eyes as an electrical flash lit up the room like a massive firework had silently gone off, creating a whole load of smoke that made them cough.

Of Colonel Karim, there was no sign. Perhaps she had been completely vaporised by the power feedback.

And the cables were both ablaze now.

Sarah Jane was trying the sonic but it wasn't working and she realised it had drained itself on the alien world. Getting them back here.

'Where's your sonic screwdriver?' Jo called through the door.

'In the TARDIS,' the Doctor said back.

'And we can't get in because we stopped ourselves remembering the key, so it faded away.' Sarah Jane smiled sadly at the irony.

'Doctor,' said Jo quietly, bravely ignoring the destruction around her, destruction getting closer to claiming them with each second. 'Doctor, I just want to say...I'm so glad I saw you again. I waited all this time. And it was worth it. Every second.' She shrugged to Sarah Jane. 'Funny thing is, your funeral turns out to be ours instead.'

'Doctor,' Sarah Jane added. 'All of you. Look after Luke for me. Please.'

'Listen!' The Doctor was now yelling excitedly through the door over the two of them. 'Listen to me! My funeral! Don't you see?'

Sarah Jane and Jo looked at one another and then, as one, turned back to look behind them – through the smoke and flame, past the three panicking Shansheeth who were failing to stop the flames which had now spread to the drapes, engulfing the whole back end of the room in flame.

They shrieked. They squawked.

But Sarah Jane and Jo focused on just one thing.

The lead-lined coffin.

They half ran, half-dragged each other to it, and pulled the lid up. Sarah Jane made Jo get in first and then as the whole Memory Weave set up exploded, she followed.

The last things Sarah Jane saw as she closed the lid tightly on herself and Jo was Azure, flying across the room, wings flapping furiously, screeching in madness and anger at her, his talons dragging across the coffin lid as she pulled it tight.

That, and the flaming cables finally reaching the power source in the floor.

They felt the explosion from within. It churned the coffin up, bouncing it over the floor.

And then all was silent. The two women counted to ten, then pushed the lid of the coffin up and scrambled out.

The Funeral Chamber was all but gone – just the walls remained, scorched black. Of the three Shansheeth, nothing but a few black feathers were left.

The Memory Weaves, the consoles, the Cradle, and the pews, all turned to ash.

Only the TARDIS was whole, untouched and indestructible as ever. The brilliant, amazing, wonderful TARDIS that had been both their homes at different times.

The door to the Funeral Chamber was gone, embedded in the wall of the corridor outside, forced out there by the explosion.

And walking through the smoke were Clyde, Rani and Santiago, each of them hugging Sarah Jane and Jo for all they were worth.

As the smoke cleared, the Doctor was leaning nonchalantly against the now empty door frame, as if he did things like this every day.

Which he did.

They all did.

Because that's what made them all so brilliant.

The Groske was there, wiping soot off the walls. 'Take forever to clean. Groske busy for weeks.' He sniffed the air. 'Smell of roast chicken.' And he scampered around, busy and happy.

As they all moved towards the Doctor, he held up a hand.

'One thing. The Mona Lisa coming to life?'

'Long story,' said Rani.

He threw his arms around Clyde and Rani's shoulders and looked his old companions straight in the face. 'Now then, Smith and Jones. How brilliant were you?' He nodded at the coffin. 'The trap turned out to be the solution. That's so neat. I could write a thesis.'

Jo and Sarah Jane just hugged each other and laughed with relief.

Chapter Twelve

Until next time

The attic at 13 Bannerman Road was silent, when suddenly Mister Smith detected a temporal flux.

The source was the TARDIS, which wheezed and groaned into solidity in front of the computer, and the doors opened.

First Clyde, then Rani and finally Santiago emerged.

'Whoa!' Clyde said. 'The attic. Home! It's like everything moved around us. I'm so never getting used to that.'

Rani was staring at Mr Smith. 'You are in big trouble. Those Shansheeth were bad!'

Mr Smith apologised. 'It transpires that you encountered a rogue element and the Wide Wing of the High Shansheeth Nest has already sent their apologies.'

Santiago was staring at Mr Smith. 'On top of everything else, you've got a talking computer in the chimney.' He hugged Rani and Clyde. 'Of course you have. Why wouldn't you?'

Inside the amazing TARDIS, Sarah Jane and Jo were saying goodbye to the Doctor.

Jo was running her hands over the console. It looked very different to the one she remembered and yet... somehow so familiar. She sniffed loudly. 'Same old TARDIS,' she said. 'Doesn't matter what you've changed, it still smells the same.'

Sarah Jane breathed in deeply and then nodded in agreement.

'But it's time to go,' Jo continued. 'Because if I stand here any longer, I'll stay forever. And these days, I'd slow you down.'

The Doctor busied himself with the console, not catching either of their eyes. 'Yeah,' he said. 'I'd really better go. You know me. Things to do.'

'It's daft,' said Sarah Jane quietly. 'Because we both had this theory that if you ever died, we'd feel it. Somehow. We'd just know. But that's silly, isn't it?'

The Doctor looked at them. 'I don't know. Maybe not. Because between you and me, if that day ever comes,' and he leaned towards them, as if telling then something top secret, 'I think the whole universe might shiver.'

Jo and Sarah Jane stared at him, captivated. Until he went "boo!" very suddenly and made them jump. And laugh. Jo hugged him first and then stood back, to let Sarah Jane say her goodbye.

'Until next time,' he whispered to her, so that only Sarah Jane could hear.

She smiled and followed Jo out of the TARDIS and into the attic, where they joined the teenagers, watching as the police box faded away.

After a few moments' sad silence, Santiago nudged Rani. 'It's just like you said. You save the world. From an attic. In Ealing!'

Rani smiled. 'You know, we do. We sort out Slitheen. And Sontarans. And the Trickster. And your family fight oil barons and factories and that's equally important. But I live over the road, and Clyde's mum is just a few streets away. At the end of the day, who's waiting for you?'

Santiago shrugged. 'Maybe it's time to make some changes. I dunno.'

Jo was suddenly behind him, and kissed the back of his head. 'I think our next stop is Norway, sweetheart. Meet up

with your mum and dad and have a bit of a break, yeah?'

'I'd like that,' Santiago agreed.

'So would I,' said Jo.

'But before then, I'm starving.'

Jo turned to Sarah Jane. 'Got any food in this house?'

'Must be something in the fridge. Probably not much, though. I'm not one for cooking,' Sarah Jane said.

'Great. We'll whip something up,' Jo said and led Santiago out of the attic and downstairs.

Rani was about to follow, but Clyde asked Sarah Jane a question. 'D'you think there's lots of Jo Grants out there? Old companions of the Doctor?'

Sarah Jane smiled. 'I do a little search now and again.' 'You Google "TARDIS"?'

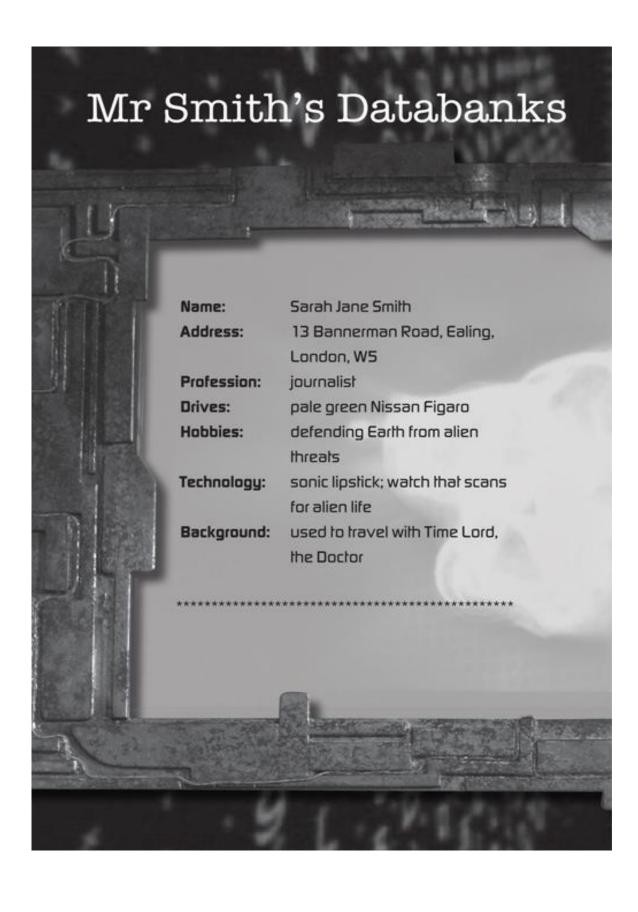
'Hey,' said Sarah Jane. 'It works. I mean, I can't always be sure. I know a woman in Australia called Tegan Jovanka, fighting for Aboriginal rights. There's a Ben and Polly running an orphanage in India. A Doctor Holloway in San Francisco looking into new breakthroughs in surgery. I knew a lovely doctor once, Harry Sullivan.' Sarah Jane sighed sadly. 'He did such good work with vaccines, saved thousands of lives. Then there's a woman called Dorothy who runs that company, "A Charitable Earth", raising billions, where she works alongside a Melanie Bush, providing PCs to schools in Africa. And this couple in Cambridge, professors at the university, Ian and Barbara Chesterton. Rumour has it, they've never aged, not since the Sixties. So yeah, I often wonder...'

'That'll be us one day,' said Clyde to Rani.

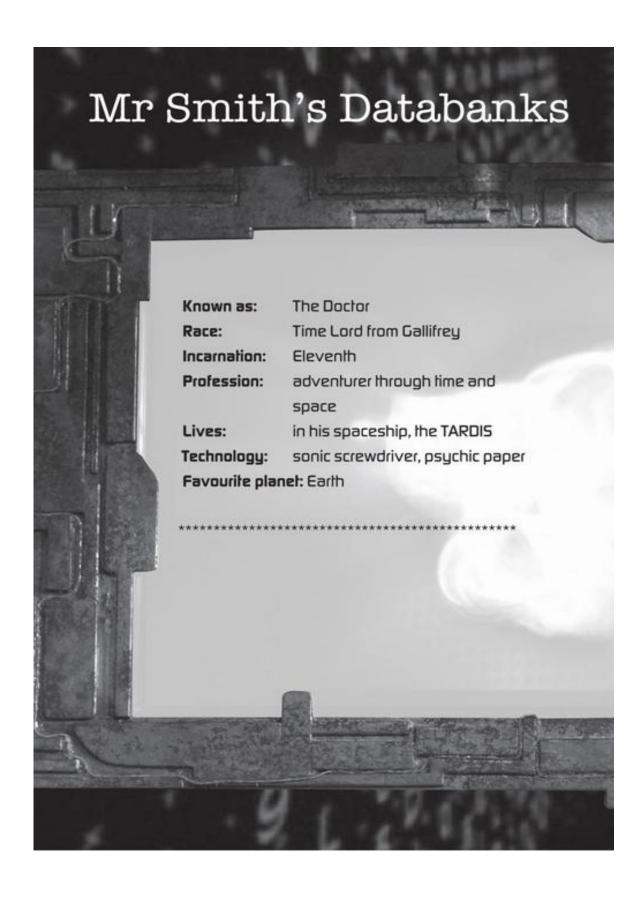
'Out there. Still fighting.'

Sarah Jane held them close. 'Echoes of the Doctor, all over the world. With friends like us, he's never going to die, is he?'

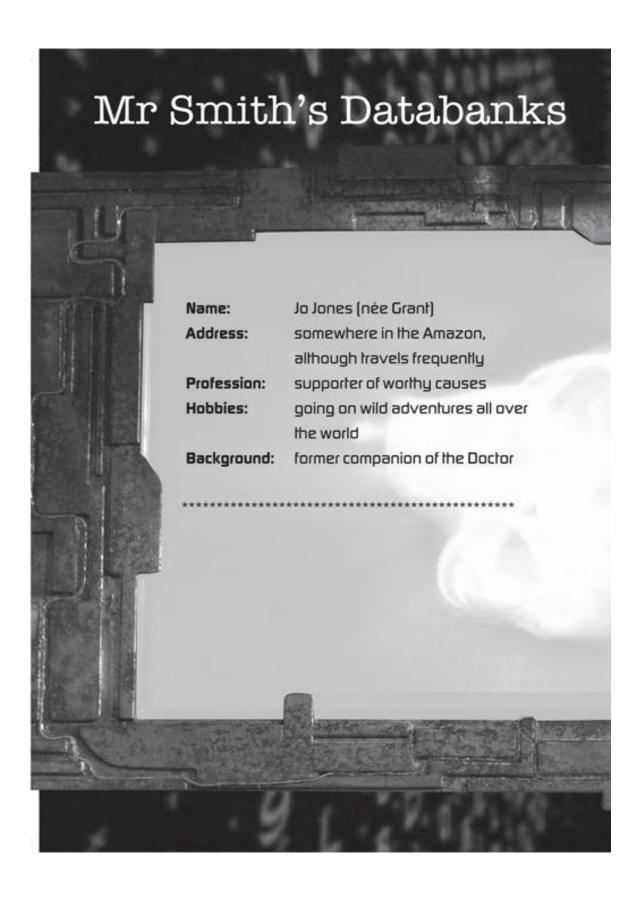
And with a little smile at Mr Smith, Sarah Jane led them out of the attic, and downstairs to find out what was happening in the kitchen.



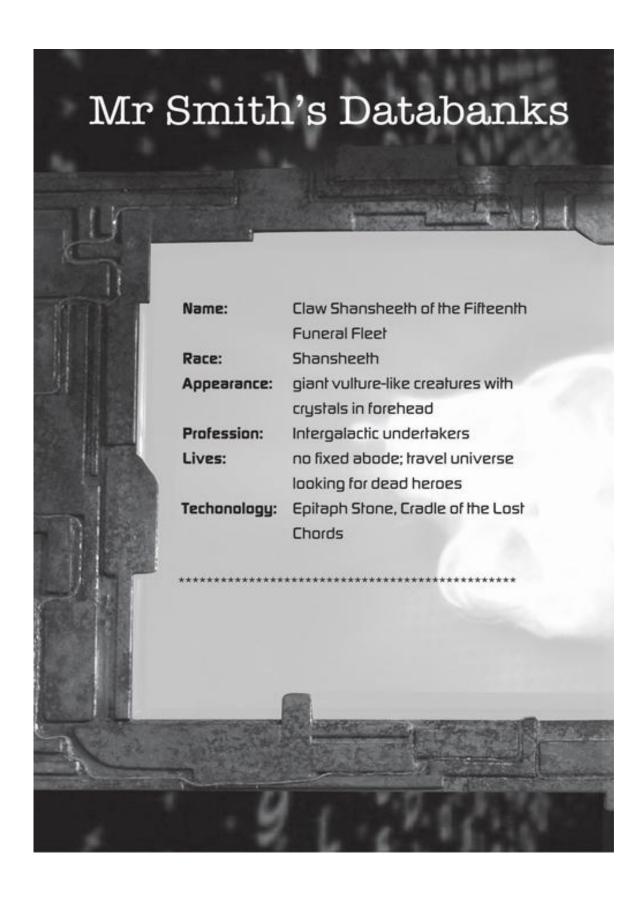




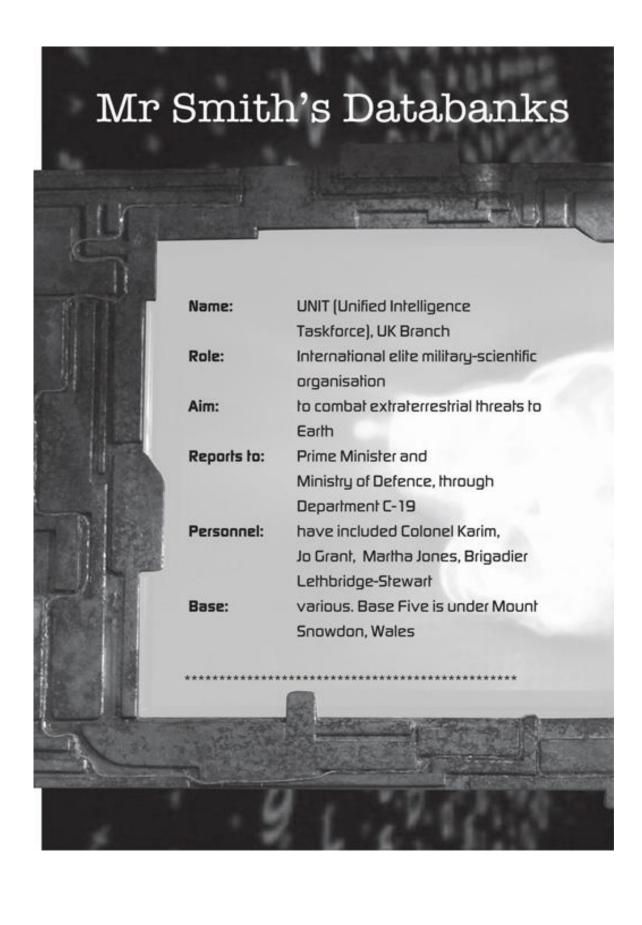




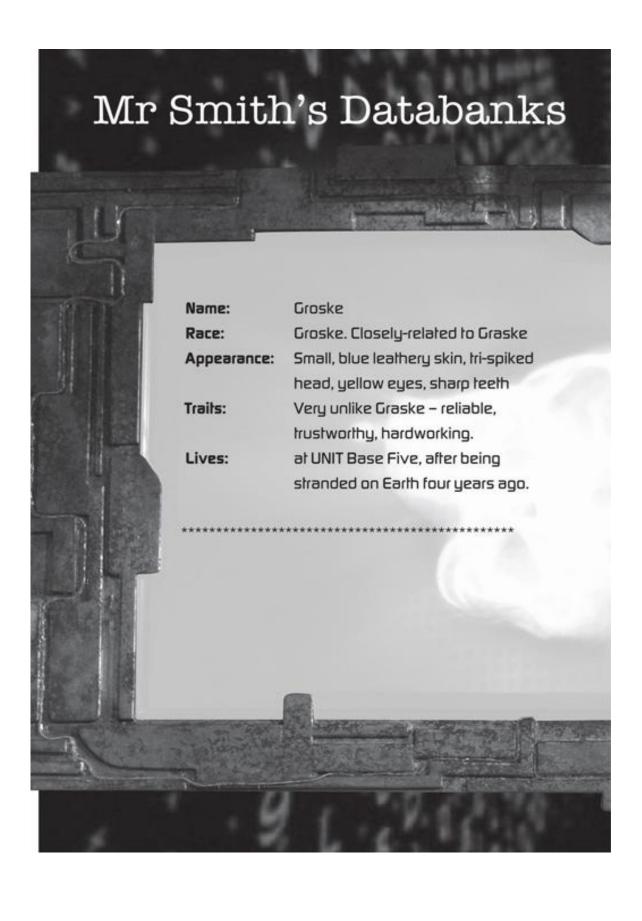














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